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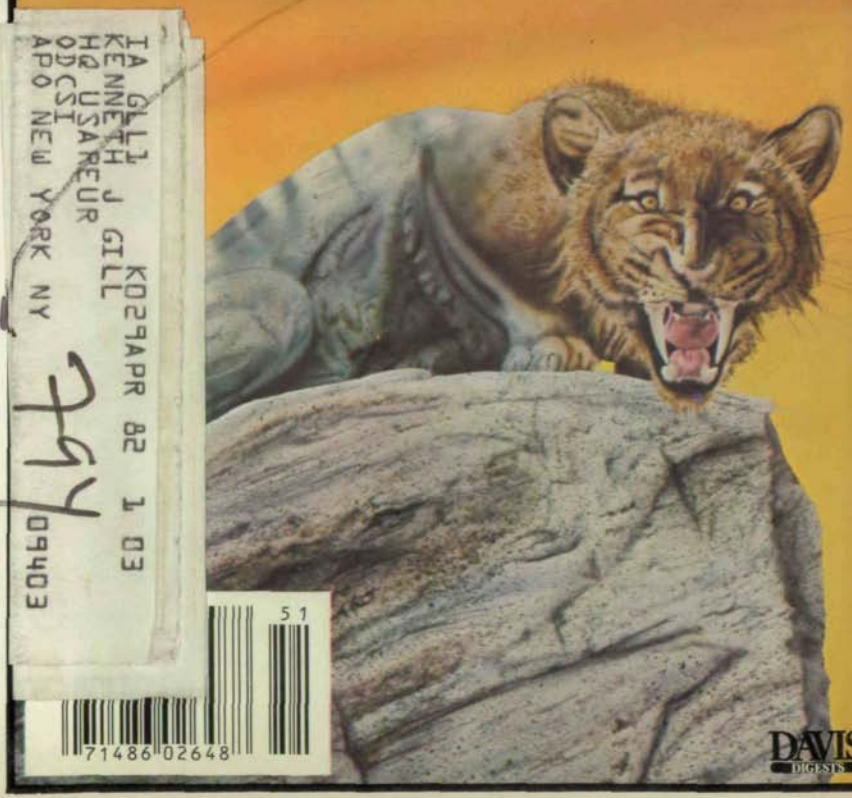

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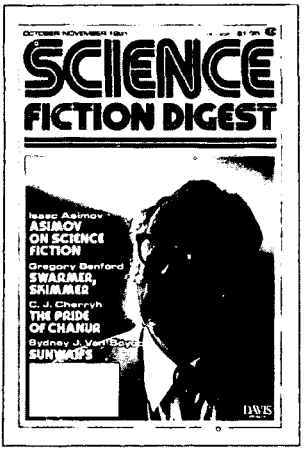

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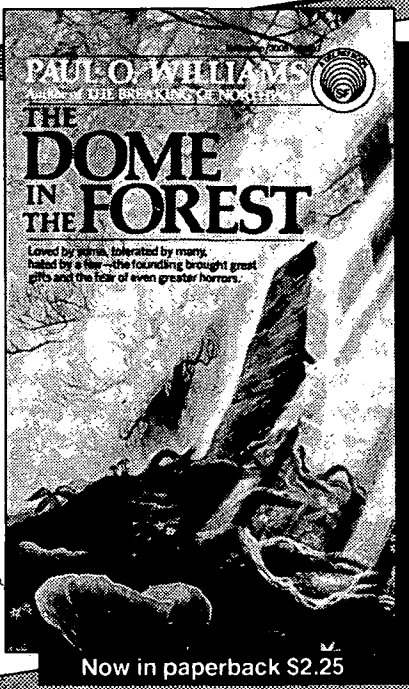
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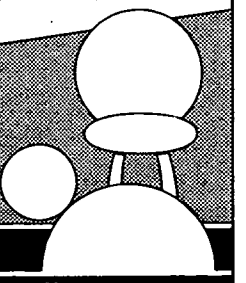

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105

120

68

1 **COVER, "The Time-Warp Trauma"** — Broeck Steadman

6 **EDITORIAL: WHAT WRITERS GO THROUGH** — Isaac Asimov

16 **ON BOOKS** — Baird Searles

24 **The Time-Warp Trauma** — J. O. Jeppson

38 **The Gongs of Ganymede** — Martin Gardner

40 **ADVENTURES IN UNHISTORY:**
THE SECRET OF HYPERBOREA — Avram Davidson

63 **The Santa Clone Interview** — Valdis Augstkalns

68 **The Jarabon** — Lee Killough

88 **Improbable Bestiary:**
The Thing in the Jar — F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre

90 **Wrong Number** — F. M. Busby

104 **Packing Up** — P. J. MacQuarrie

118 **End Game** — Brian Aldiss

119 **THE SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR** — Erwin S. Strauss

120 **A Thief in Ni-Moya** — Robert Silverberg

166 **LETTERS**

Joel Davis: President & Publisher **Isaac Asimov:** Editorial Director
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EDITORIAL: WHAT WRITERS GO THROUGH

by Isaac Asimov

art: Frank Kelly Freas

Every once in a while I get a letter that strikes a chord. Jeanne S. King of Marietta, Georgia, suggested that I write an editorial on what writers go through. Her tender heart bled for writers and I think she has a point.

First, let me make it clear what I mean by "writers." I don't want to confine the word only to those who are successful, who have published best-selling books, or who crank out reams of published material every year (if not every day), or who make a lavish living out of their pens, typewriter, or word-processors, or who have gained fame and adulation.

I also mean those writers who just sell an occasional item, who make only a bit of pin money to eke out incomes earned mainly in other fashions, whose names are not household words, and who are not recognized in the street.

In fact, let me go farther and say I even mean those writers who never sell anything, who are writers only in the sense that they work doggedly at it, sending out story after story, and living in a hope that is not yet fulfilled.

We can't dismiss this last classification as "failures" and not "real" writers. For one thing, they are not necessarily failures forever. Almost every writer, before he becomes a success, even a runaway supernova success, goes through an apprentice period when he's a "failure."

Secondly, even if a writer is destined always to be a failure, and even if he is never going to sell, he remains a human being for whom all the difficulties and frustrations of a writer's life exist and, in fact, exist without the palliation of even an occasional and minor triumph.

If we go to the other extreme and consider the writer whose every product is an apparently sure sale, we find that the difficulties and frustrations have not disappeared. For one thing, no number of triumphs, no amount of approval, seems to have any carrying power

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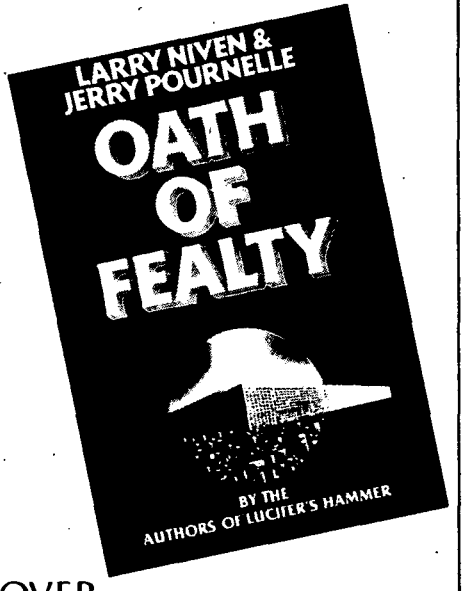

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at the crucial moment.

When even the most successful writer sits down before a blank piece of paper, he is bound to feel that he is starting from scratch and, indeed, that the Damoclean sword of rejection hangs over him. (By the way, when I say "he" and "him," I mean to add "she" and "her" every time.)

If I may use myself as an example, I always wince a little when anyone, however sincerely and honestly, assumes that I am never rejected. I admit that I am rarely rejected, but between "rarely" and "never" is a vast gulf. Even though I no longer work on spec and write only when a particular item is requested, I *still* run the risk. The year doesn't pass without at least one failure. It was only a couple of months ago that *Esquire* ordered a specific article from me. I duly delivered it; and they, just as duly, handed it back.

That is the possibility all of us live with. We sit there alone, pounding out the words, with our heart pounding in time. Each sentence brings with it a sickening sensation of not being right. Each page keeps us wondering if we are moving in the wrong direction.

Even if, for some reason, we feel we *are* getting it right and that the whole thing is singing with operatic clarity, we are going to come back to it the next day and re-read it and hear only a duck's quacking.

It's torture for every one of us.

Then comes the matter of re-writing and polishing; of removing obvious flaws (at least, they seem obvious, but are they really?) and replacing them with improvements (or are we just making things worse?). There's simply no way of telling if the story is being made better or is just being pushed deeper into the muck until the time finally comes when we either tear it up as hopeless, or risk the humiliation of rejection by sending it off to an editor.

Once the story is sent off, no amount of steeling one's self, no amount of telling one's self over and over that it is sure to be rejected, can prevent one from harboring that one wan little spark of hope. Maybe— Maybe—

The period of waiting is refined torture in itself. Is the editor simply not getting round to it, or has he read it and is he suspended in uncertainty? Is he going to read it again and *maybe* decide to use it—or has it been lost—or has it been tossed aside to be mailed back at some convenient time and has it been forgotten?

How long do you wait before you write a query letter? And if you do write a letter, is it subservient enough? Sycophantic enough?

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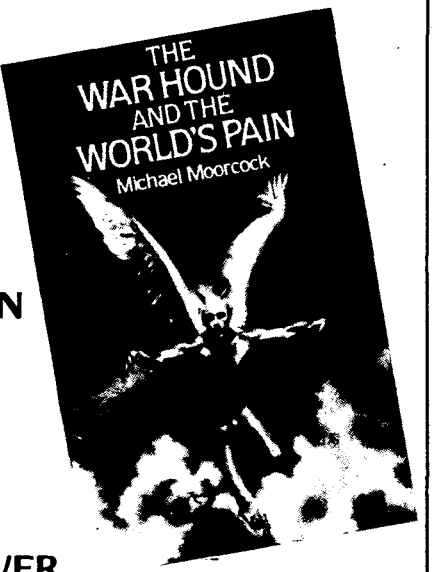

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Grovelling enough? After all, you don't want to offend him. He might be just on the point of accepting; and if an offensive letter from you comes along, he may snarl and rip your manuscript in two, sending you the halves.

And when the day comes that the manila envelope appears in the mail, all your mumbling to yourself that it is sure to come will not avail you. The sun will go into eclipse.

It's been over forty years since I've gone through all this in its full hellishness, but I remember it with undiminished clarity.

And then even if you make a sale, you have to withstand the editor's suggestions which, at the very least, mean you have to turn back to the manuscript, work again, add or change or subtract material, and perhaps produce a finished product that will be so much worse than what had gone before that you lose the sale you thought you had made. At the worst, the changes requested are so misbegotten from your standpoint that they ruin the whole story in your eyes; and yet you may be in a position where you dare not refuse, so that you must maim your brainchild rather than see it die. (Or ought you to take back the story haughtily and try another editor? And will the first editor then blacklist you?)

Even after the item is sold and paid for and published, the triumph is rarely unalloyed. The number of miseries that might still take place are countless. A book can be produced in a slipshod manner or it can have a repulsive bookjacket, or blurbs that give away the plot or clearly indicate that the blurb-writer didn't follow the plot.

A book can be non-promoted, treated with indifference by the publisher and therefore found in no bookstores, and sell no more than a few hundred copies. Even if it begins to sell well, that can be aborted when it is reviewed unsympathetically or even viciously by someone with no particular talent or qualifications in criticism.

If you sell a story to a magazine you may feel it is incompetently illustrated, or dislike the blurb, or worry about misprints. You are even liable to face the unsympathetic comments of individual readers who will wax merry, sardonic, or contemptuous at your expense—and what are *their* qualifications for doing so?

You will bleed as a result. I never met a writer who didn't bleed at the slightest unfavorable comment, and no number of favorable or even ecstatic remarks will serve as a styptic pencil.

In fact, even total success has its discomforts and inconveniences. There are, for instance . . . :

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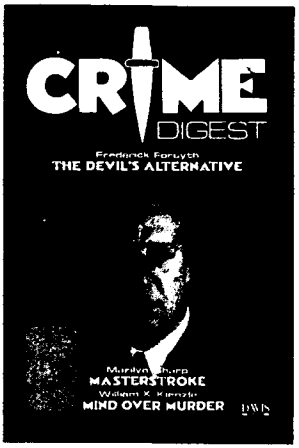

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pounding their books or (if you can't bring yourself to do that) getting envelopes, making the package, expending stamps, and possibly even going to the postoffice.

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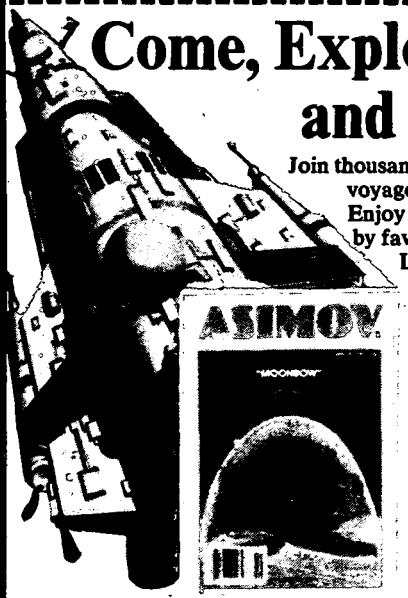

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the little dears.

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Well, what goes for chemistry, goes for writing. I know all the miseries, but somewhere among them is happiness. I can't easily explain where it is or what it consists of, but it is there. I know the happiness and I experience it, and I will not stop writing while I live—and may I die if I would change places with the President of the United States.

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If a book appears in hardcover, there are really two logical opportunities to review it; the second, of course, is on its almost inevitable publication in paperback. This is maybe the preferable time to bring it to the reader's attention, in fact, since it is then available to a vastly greater number of people. A review of a hardcover edition can be forgotten by the majority who can't afford it, by the time the less expensive edition appears.

I passed up Gregory Benford's *Timescape* when it was first published; now it is out in paperback and, in the meantime, has won a Nebula as best novel of the year (the Nebula is awarded by the Science Fiction Writers of America and is voted on by its membership). This is one of the statistically unlikely hazards in waiting to review a book; the winning of an award brings a certain weight to it that is not there when it appears virginally unsullied by praise or blame. I might note that while it is obviously impossible to ignore the fact of the award, my feelings about awards are such a mixture of positive and negative that they more or less cancel each other out.

However, I would like to use as a springboard for my review something that was said about *Timescape* having won, something that I mentioned a few issues back. This was to the effect that it won because it was the only *real* science fiction novel nominated. My reaction to the book is that that statement is almost too literally true, viewing science fiction in a reactionary sense. *Timescape* is a

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lot of science, some fiction, and not a very good mix.

The premise of the novel is simply put: it oscillates between 1998 and 1962–3. In each time, we are concerned with a group of academic, scientific types, the earlier in California, the later in Cambridge (England). By 1998 the world is an ecological mess; in particular, a diatom bloom in the Pacific is threatening all sea life. A startlingly original line of research at Cambridge suggests the possibility of communicating with the past to warn it and perhaps prevent what is happening. The story (and I use the term loosely) concerns for the most part the technical efforts on the part of the future and the bafflement as to what and from where are these messages on the part of the past.

Now high-tech SF was and still is, probably, the backbone of the field; but as I have noted before, there is an art to bringing it off: this mostly consists of the ability to integrate science and fiction into a literary whole, as epitomized by Clarke and Asimov. After all, it's being written to be marketed to readers, *not* to be submitted to an academic board to gain a Ph.D.

Now, I can buy the novel whose first hundred pages are of the everybody-into-the-lab-so-we-can-explain-what's-happening school of SF. But when it gets close to page 300 and we're still not out of the lab, as in *Timescape*, I begin to feel that something is wrong. In all fairness, however, I *must* note that this is probably the first story concerning time travel—or time communication, more correctly—to be solidly based in the science we know. Time penetration as a concept, no matter how convincing the scientific gobbledy-gook with which it is presented, has heretofore been fantasy ungrounded in contemporary science.

That's the science part of *Timescape*. The fiction part is ladled in every few pages, and it concerns the emotional and sexual lives of the researchers involved in both periods; a fairly tedious lot they are. Perhaps Benford was trying to get some period flavor by making his '60s protagonist a New York Jew transplanted to California, the classic conflicts intact, and reminiscent of all those New York Jewish novels that dominated the literary scene about then. Roth and Malamud are mentioned in the text, along with a lot of other trivia of 1962 and 1963. The author has certainly done his homework.

The English lot, despite their 1998 "locale," are equally stereotypical, bringing back *Look Back In Anger*, et al., with their ongoing class quibbling.

Also brought in, presumably in the interests of verité, are some real people; Freeman Dyson pops up in the past, and Prince Andrew,

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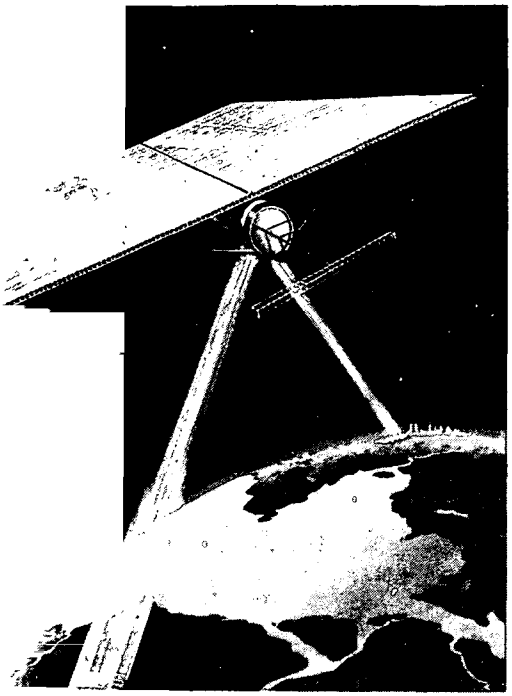

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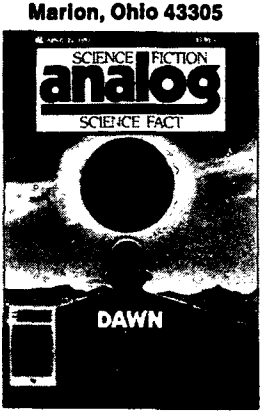

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grown to adulthood (and adultery—the Royals won't like this), in the future.

Both the science and the fiction in *Timescape* come to none-too-satisfactory conclusions, but my major complaint is that they simply don't have much to do with each other. This was for a long time one of the consistent problems with SF as literature; one can but wonder why a novel with that particular flaw was chosen as the best of the year. Is the science-fiction world, like much of the rest of our society, doing a reactionary about-face?

Before getting into the latest example of SF as family saga, let's do a quick catch up on an ongoing such epic, *THE PHOENIX LEGACY* by M. K. Wren, the first volume of which , *Sword of the Lamb,* I liked quite a lot a few months back. The second, *Shadow of the Swan*, is as good if not better than the first.

Will the Concord of two star systems of the 33rd century be able to survive the growing unrest against its elite? Will the martyred Richard's legacy of peace keep the Bonds from a full-scale revolt? Will the Lady Adrien Camine Eliseer be forced to marry the degenerate son of the wicked Lord Orin Selasis, now that Alexand De-Koven Woolf is supposedly dead? And above all, will the Phoenix Society perfect the long-range matter transmitter in time to save the Concord from disaster? These questions are partially answered in *Shadow of the Swan* and new ones set.

As a matter of fact, I'm being a bit facetious at the expense of some well-written, intelligent science fiction. *THE PHOENIX LEGACY* so far is full and satisfying; the society of the far future is superbly extrapolated, the action fast and well-integrated with the concept as a whole, the characters interesting and idiosyncratic. If the melodrama gets a bit thick at times, all the more fun, since the author pulls it off. This is one trilogy (*House of the Wolf* coming up soon) that I'll finish off with relish.

The new entry in the family-saga sweepstakes is Juanita Coulson's *CHILDREN OF THE STARS*, Book One of which is *Tomorrow's Heritage*.

For a few pages I wondered if I had wandered into a spinoff of the Phoenix Legacy by accident, since the books share a major character named Jael and a lot of snappy abbreviated nomenclature like ComLink. But *CHILDREN OF THE STARS* takes place in a much nearer future (the 2040s), and is really much closer to the kind of *Dallas* dynastic tales that one expects in a family saga.

The family is Saunder, of three grown children and the inevitable

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matriarch, Jael; the future is only semi-dreary, since Earth is pulling out of years of chaos, technologically advanced, but socially fragmented. The U.S. now consists of the Central North American Union, the United Ghetto States, and quasi-nations of family corporations, such as ComLink, owned by Todd, the Saunder family member who is more or less the protagonist.

Brother Pat is a politician, representing the Earth First interests, the conservatives who want to clean up the mess on Earth before going into space. This sets him dead against Todd and their sister, Mariette, who with her husband is one of the leaders of Goddard Colony, a space station well on the way to being self-supporting.

As the plot thickens, Goddard Colony is subjected to attack by unknown antagonists. And Todd begins to suspect that various world leaders and revolutionaries, sentenced in these ambiguous times to Saunder Enterprises Antarctic Enclave, a cryogenic facility built and maintained for the public good by the family, are not merely being kept on ice until the times change, but are being done away with. Could Pat be responsible for these nefarious doings? Or Jael?

And Todd hasn't even dropped his own bombshell yet. Through his ComLink facilities, he has contacted what can only be an alien probe vessel, first noticed out around Neptune's orbit, but heading in fast. What effect will *this* have on the whole stew?

I ran a bit hot and cold on this one. This near future is not one of those total downers; there is hope of getting out of the mess despite all the hanky-panky, and it's built up with a good deal of satisfying detail. There's a lot of action, from attacks in space to poking about the Antarctic Enclave in disguise, and some of it seems thrown in for its own sake, or to keep things going. The characters, I think, are the major problem; they have all the maturity of a soap opera cast, and considering that they're the richest and most powerful family on Earth, are a surprisingly unsophisticated lot. But if it comes down to an hour of "Dallas" or this book, I'll take *Tomorrow's Heritage* any day.

Our reprints for this issue are a mixed bag, starting off with a rare event, the reversal of the process mentioned in the first paragraph, i.e., the reprinting of a book in hardcover that has been available only in paperback. This happens more often in SF than any other field because so much good stuff was in the past first published in the disposable paperback form.

In fact, Robert Heinlein's *Beyond This Horizon* did have a hardcover edition, but it was a tiny printing by a specialty house, and

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it's now a collector's item. So it's good to know it's now available in durable form. And it was good to go back to it; it's a lot of fun.

It is one of Heinlein's pre-World War II novels, and a little puppy-doggish in form, taking off in all directions, and sometimes going in circles, but that's part of its exuberant charm. Set in a Utopic future of some centuries hence, it follows the adventures of one Hamilton Felix, the end result of the best possible genetic inheritance of generations, and his friend Monroe-Alpha Clifford.

The society is Utopian by our standards, but there are still problems. There is a revolution (what Heinlein book is complete without one?) in which the friends get involved; Hamilton meets a man from 1926 who has been held in a stasis field for centuries and they reinvent "feetball" (Monroe-Alpha keeps questioning the chap from the past about the wonderfully rugged frontier life of living off the land, having only a vague idea of history); the society benignly suggests that it would be a good idea for Hamilton to have some progeny to whom he could pass on his sterling genes and he makes a most unlikely bargain which results in a major project of the scientific community concerned with the search for the meaning of life.

It's a lot of fun, and if you've missed this classic of the field, I suggest you pick up any edition and get to know it.

Then there are three wonderful fantasies too little known to aficionados that have just appeared for the first time in mass market paperback. Joan Aiken's *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase, Black Hearts in Battersea*, and *Nightbirds on Nantucket* are linked by a few shared characters and the fact that they take place in an alternate universe, which the reader isn't even told about directly until the second book.

Wolves is a sort of Gothic out of Dickens, with the poor relation from London, the governess who takes over the house when the parents are lost at sea, and the satisfyingly engineered escape from the workhouse. There is no overt fantasy, but the reader is given pause by an England of the early 19th century in which packs of wolves attack and stop local trains.

In *Black Hearts*, on following a character from *Wolves* to London, we discover what has been so subliminally askew. King James III is on the throne, the Stuarts have kept the dynasty, and it's the Hanoverians that are hatching plots to blow up the Court. We are promptly involved in one such plot, which also has to do with a salmon-colored palace on the Thames, several lost heirs, and the

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wolves again, this time invading Hyde Park because of the hard winter.

In *Nightbirds* all the stops are pulled and things really go amok. A character from *Black Hearts*, another to be lost at sea, is rescued by a Nantucket whaling ship, captained by a madman who is in search of a great pink whale (yes, that's *pink*). Back on Nantucket, another dastardly Hanoverian plot is revealed, this one to fire a giant cannon from the Island across the sea at Bonnie King Jamie, the recoil of which will knock Nantucket south into New York Harbor. Naturally, the inhabitants are furious, less at being displaced than at being put that close to New York.

These books are delicious, and are absolutely must reading for Anglophiles, supporters of the Stuarts, and anyone who likes stylishly written and witty take-offs of literature.

Finally, noting publications connected with this publication, a collection of *Science Fiction Puzzle Tales* by Martin Gardner, all of which appeared here, is now available.

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THE TIME-WARP TRAUMA

by J.O. Jeppson

art: Tim Kirk

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Dr. Jeppson insists that rather more of this is true than one really ought to have to believe. We're not sure if we should believe her . . .

In the hotel headquarters of a luncheon club called the Psychoanalytic Alliance, it was not immediately apparent that summer was arriving in Manhattan. The sub-basement dining room was as dim as ever; the plastic flowers on the sideboard still as faded; the waiters no more languid than usual.

Nevertheless a noticeable change could be detected in the demeanor of Pshrinks Anonymous. Clothing was lighter in weight and color. There were no briefcases bulging with unread journals as well as dog-eared manuscripts of theoretical papers in search of a publisher. The members talked about vacations instead of work, funny movies instead of psychological films, love instead of sex, and they smiled cheerfully. Some even quoted poetry.

All except the Oldest Member. He had arrived, for once, earlier than anyone else, but was strangely silent as the room filled up. His tweeds were rumpled, the waxed tips of his luxuriant white moustache drooped, and he sucked meditatively on an unlit cigar. The fact that his Salade Sullivan was untouched may have been due to his unreconstructed Freudianism, but other Pshrinks whispered that the O.M. was distinctly off his feed.

"Perhaps he's just come from having an EKG at his internist's," whispered a Pshrink, scratching his chest over his pacemaker.

"New York City bonds are probably down again," diagnosed a Pshrink who favored Ego psychology as well as Swiss banks.

An Interpersonal looked at her watch and yawned. "I have lots of time," she said. "My first afternoon patient is away on vacation early, and I think I should give you all the benefit of some in-depth research I am doing on the sexual pleasures of the middle-aged, the intensity of which would give Freud pause, since it is quite probable that as he grew older . . ."

The Oldest Member did not seem to react.

"The moustaches are not rising to the bait," said another Interpersonal.

"Oh, Hell; it's too close to summer vacation to listen to anything today," said an Eclectic. "It's bad enough having to sit in our offices and listen to tales of woe."

"You object to listening to your patients!" said several Pshrinks.

"Not exactly," said the Eclectic, "but right now my wife calls

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frequently to tell me her latest plans for an impossible vacation with all her relatives . . . ."

"Spouses are off conversation limits," said the Interpersonal, who was well known to have unseemly passion for her own spouse.

The Oldest Member pursed his lips. Then he grunted.

Waiting silently, the other members of Pshrinks Anonymous shuffled their feet and glanced nervously at each other. The Oldest Member did not speak.

The Interpersonal reddened and said, "I'm sorry, spouses aren't exactly taboo topics—although I realize everyone is sick of hearing about mine—so I don't want to inhibit anyone else's conversation."

"Um," said the Oldest Member, sitting up straighter for a second. Then he slumped back.

"Before I have nervous prostration," said the Interpersonal anxiously, "please tell us what's the matter."

"Only a difficult case, " said the Oldest Member truculently, "in fact, I could say a fascinating case, but you all seem so bored with our beloved profession, now that summer has started, so absorbed in your vacations that I am displeased with your lack of serious conversation about psychoanalytic issues."

Several Pshrinks hastily looked at their watches, fingered their vacation brochures, and made attempts to rise.

"Sit down!" roared the Oldest Member. "I will now describe the case which has been occupying my attention today. The patient was a man afflicted with that permanent vacation known as retirement. Not that he was absolutely required to retire at the age he did, but his spouse insisted, disregarding the fact that, as the world's population ages, the antiquated notion of mandatory retirement is rapidly undermining civilization, which should not lose the capabilities, the training and knowledge of so-called senior citizens, most of whom are unhappy and frustrated over being cast aside."

"But . . ." said the youngest member.

"And furthermore, all of you should be grateful that ours is a fortunate profession, a remarkably long-lasting summertime of being in one's prime until there's nothing left but winter. Psychoanalytical expertise and acumen increase with the years, making retirement not only unnecessary but unwise."

"Hear Hear!" said Pshrinks who were middle-aged and up.

"Naturally you agree with me. You will also appreciate the difficulties posed in working with this patient. Actually, his problem turned out to be so unusual that—but I am sure you find it impossible to imagine that there could be any mental conditions with which I

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have not had professional experience."

"Perish forbid," said the Interpersonal solemnly.

"Thank you," said the Oldest Member.

My patient [the O.M. explained], a Mr. Y, had an unusual form of altered state of consciousness in which he believed himself to have been transported bodily into another time and place. I have told you this to begin with because, unlike *some* members of this club, I do not believe in narrating a story in such a way as to arouse suspense. I give you the facts plus subsequent description and pertinent explication, as any Pshrink should do in presenting a case report to his fellow professionals.

Mr. Y was referred to me by one of my oldest colleagues, whose husband had also been forced into obligatory retirement and had insisted that my colleague move with him to one of those adult housing colonies—the kind that is surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by attack canines at night—in one of the sun states, where Pshrinks betray the principles of analytic technique and lapse into neurotic acting-out from which they would have been safe in Manhattan, where we are not likely to hold marathon group sessions in communal hot tubs in the open air to investigate patterns and possibilities of genital and extra-genital touching, to say nothing of phony emotional catharsis supposedly achieved by much yelling and baring of fangs at one's immediate neighbor and . . .

["I had a little trouble following that sentence," ventured one of the younger Pshrinks. "I'm also under the impression that you don't know what's going on in Manhattan . . . ."]

. . . and I don't *want* to know [said the Oldest Member]. At any rate, this patient—according to my colleague, who was, naturally, forced to give up her Manhattan practice—was very close to termination of his analysis; and I was to finish it. After our first interview, I believed that he would need merely a few months of integrating the excellent work already done, during which his various sexual problems had been analyzed satisfactorily so that he was happy with his third wife and remembered his mother with insight.

Mr. Y was even older than his former analyst, but—as you know—we modern Pshrinks have discovered that the psychoanalytic technique of investigating the psyche is quite suitable for older patients. My retired colleague and I believed that Mr. Y was an analytic success and had adapted to the stress of retirement.

Mr. Y had a pension from his job plus accumulated capital, and had just inherited from his brother a small cooperative apartment

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on Central Park West, which he and his wife could well afford. He could even afford me, although I did not expect he would have to stay in treatment long. I resisted the temptation to make his analysis as perfect as possible, exploring and resolving the remaining oedipal problem now that at last he had a male analyst . . .

["There's always an unresolved residue of oedipal problem," said one of his more pedantic colleagues at the other end of the table.

"For Freudians," said the Interpersonal.]

. . . but after we had worked together that winter and spring, we decided to terminate at the start of my vacation. That was last summer. Just a year ago. Little did I realize . . .

But first I must explain that Mr. Y, prior to moving to Manhattan in retirement, had always lived in the suburbs, from which he had commuted by train and then taxi to his job in the financial district. He worked in one of those solid establishments that looks like a refined fortress of classic style with heavy brass doors and the proper amount of metal grillework to be closed by human hands when one takes the elevator. He had always felt safe at his job, and in Grand Central Station, which of course he never saw except at hours when it was full of other well-dressed people from the suburbs going to or coming from work . . . .

["Considering that you don't believe in creating suspense," said a Pshrink steeped in the mysteries of Object Relations, "I wonder why it's killing me?"

"Ah," said the Oldest Member through the Buttered Bun Bulima he had savagely bitten into after being interrupted, "perhaps your restlessness has deep roots in your id."

The Interpersonal looked at the cobwebs on the ceiling. "You are, I think, telling a story fraught with clinically intriguing implications, but one wonders if you've ever had any traumatic experience with editors of psychoanalytic journals."

"They wouldn't dare," said the Oldest Member, brushing crumbs off his flamboyant tie. By now his moustache points were erect.]

As I was saying [continued the Oldest Member firmly], Mr. Y began living on Central Park West at about the same time that he entered analysis with me. It was his first encounter with actual city living, and like most out-of-towners he was full of fears about the dangers in Manhattan.

There was a police lock on the door of his apartment, iron fencework over his windows; and he refused to go outside at night or in Central Park at any hour although, like myself, he was tall, physically robust, looked younger than his years, and walked with brisk

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assurance. He was therefore in little danger from muggers; but in spite of our analytic work on the subject, he did not choose to walk in the park.

Yet there, outside his windows, was Olmstead's magnificent creation, littered and looted and graffitied to be sure, but still worth experiencing. To get to my Fifth Avenue office he actually took taxis through the transverse street! One day he began to notice that, as summer's warmth came closer, the park seemed to be safely full of happy people of non-villainous aspect. He began to contemplate the daring experiment of walking what amounts to only four long blocks from Central Park West (really Eighth Avenue) to my office on Fifth.

At the next-to-final scheduled session, Mr. Y announced that he felt so free of neurosis that he could enjoy not only retirement but the decision to walk through the park. "I am capable of being like everyone else," he said.

He had not wanted to be like everyone else to begin with. According to his previous analyst, he had resented his stodgy job; his inhibited first wife; his originally scandalous second wife, who upon marriage took up bridge and the Junior League; his conventional sons, who were duplicating his previous suburban existence; and his history of traveling only in group educational tours that were tax-deductible, safe, and boring.

Mr. Y had even been a surreptitious subscriber to a disreputable brand of literature known as science fiction, but after a few sessions with me the last shreds of attachment to it seemed to have cleared up. At least, he did not talk about it any more.

I was pleased that he had decided to walk across the park to his last session. I felt that it was a suitable culmination to a successful analysis, and as an old—I mean *longtime* New Yorker, I did not in the least feel concerned about his plan. Therefore I was as shocked as any trained, self-respecting Pshrink is ever likely to be when Mr. Y came to his supposedly final session in a psychologically deteriorated state.

"I've just had a terrifying experience in the park," he said, flopping down on my couch. "I hope I'm just psychotic—something simple and normal like that. I don't think it could be a developing phobia about birds, although I did rather resent my older sister's attention to our parakeet."

I waited—I am a Freudian, you know—but he did not continue. He turned around so that he could look out my office window to the green of the park. It was already such a warm day that I was using the air conditioner. I decided that, due to the abnormal, unanalytic

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conditions of this last interview, I had better ask questions.

"What happened?"

"I think I sat down in a time-warp. It was at the top of a hill where they're doing a lot of construction inside—the hill, that is, some subway extension—and the ground was vibrating. I sat down on a bench to rest for a minute and the machinery stopped. I noticed a bird on a nest in a nearby tree."

"It reminded you of your mother?"

"Hell, no. It looked like a healthy, maternal, friendly creature; probably a robin. What happened was that the sun was so warm I felt sleepy. Perhaps I dozed. I don't know. I think the machinery started up again, and suddenly everything blurred. When it righted, the scene was different. The trees were not the same and I was sitting on a warm stone, not on a park bench."

"Have you ever before had dreams that seemed like reality?"

"Not like this one. I wish I'd thought to pick a leaf or something, to prove I was actually there."

"Where?"

"I don't know. I took biology in high school, but that was a long time ago. The robin looked like another bird, and Manhattan sounded odd. Usually there's a constant background noise, a sort of pulsating hum as if the city were breathing out there, but that was missing. I'd been sitting in a place where you couldn't see buildings for the trees, but when the bird changed, everything changed. It felt as if the city were gone."

"Tell me about the bird."

"Ugly creature, bigger than a robin. More like a crow, sitting on a limb near me. When I moved, it leapt up and soared down over my head, gliding into some tall bushes where it disappeared. For a minute I thought it was going to rake my head with the claws on its wings."

"Claws? Are you sure?"

"That's right. I hope I was dreaming, because the bird screamed as it went by and I could see that there were teeth in its beak. I didn't like the long, snaky tail either, for all that it had rather pretty purple feathers on it."

["I've always wanted to know what color Archaeopteryx was," said the Interpersonal.]

The patient calmed down on my couch—it often has that effect, especially since I put a narrow oriental rug on it to cover the worn spots. At first I thought the rug would be distracting, but then I remembered the photograph of the Master's cluttered office

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and . . . where was I? Ah yes. When I was questioning the patient, it occurred to me that no doubt he had seen a picture of the late Jurassic period and for some reason hallucinated it when he rested on the way to my office. I told him as much, and said that this sort of hypnagogic hallucination is common in the twilight zone between waking and sleep. Common and not dangerous.

"Can't you put off your vacation, Doc? I want another session."

"Very well. We will explore the psychodynamics of the content of this particular mental aberration, and perhaps find out what caused it."

"Besides senility?" asked Mr. Y with a feeble laugh.

"Nonsense—you and I are the same age," I blurted out, a mistake I have hardly made since those harrowing days of my own training analysis which caused me to overidentify with my own patients.

Mr. Y laughed heartily. "I'm glad you're human, Doc."

It was humiliating. I saw Mr. Y to the door, fully expecting that he would return for the next visit quite recovered from his fright. Unfortunately, I was so preoccupied by the fantasy of a time-warp that I forgot to warn him not to walk through the park to his next visit, for we had to investigate his use of the maternal symbolism of birds, and the psychic trauma implicit in the emphasis on teeth and claws.

["A toothed beak isn't as fraught with portent as a vagina dentata, is it?" asked the Interpersonal.]

I will not answer frivolous questions. This is a serious case presentation about the obscure restlessness that can afflict people who are forced to retire, to sit on benches in the warmth of sunlight, when memories and fantasies become more intense—[the Oldest Member paused and sipped his coffee. It was noted that his hand trembled slightly.]—so when Mr. Y returned the next time saying he was definitely psychotic, I was perturbed.

"This time I wasn't sleepy, I swear it," said Mr. Y. "I was walking along the same road in the park, congratulating myself that I was wide awake and in full possession of my senses—as indeed I have been since I saw you—and I stopped for just a moment to look at that same robin. She didn't change at all, and I walked on feeling pleasurably sane, remembering the old road near my small home town where I used to walk with my first girl, when suddenly I felt hemmed in by the sight of buildings in the distance and wished I were in the country."

Mr. Y stopped, his eyes suspiciously moist. "It seems that all my life I've been secretly wishing I were somebody else, somewhere else,

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but until I retired I never wished to go back, just forward to something more exciting than whatever I was experiencing. Now that I'm not working there doesn't seem anywhere to go except the past . . . ."

"Balderdash," I said.

"What do *you* know? You work. You've got a future! You'd never be so trapped in a dull present that you'd feel my longing for youth and its dreams of future glory, or experience my traumas of age, a fevered, out-of-control dissolving of *now* and finding oneself in *then*. I don't even have control over where I'm going in the past!"

"Now surely you don't believe you actually went there?"

"Yes. I was at the top of the hill when the machinery started up again. I felt dizzy, and suddenly the road was only a track of ground where the grass had been destroyed by many feet. Manhattan was gone, and I was in some other place with lots of trees containing horrible big birds with bald heads, just waiting for something to die."

"Have you been worrying about your mortality?" I asked.

"Now don't get psychoanalytic on me! I went back in time—"

"It's my job to get psychoanalytic."

"Then analyze this. I stumbled around a big rock and almost fell into some sort of swamp with bones littered everywhere. To the right was a loud noise, and soon an elephant came running hell-bent for leather with a pack of wolves at his heels."

"I doubt if wolves and elephants cohabit the same ecology."

"They did then, whenever it was. They came closer, and I saw that the elephant was much bigger than any I'd ever seen, so big that the wolves ought to have seemed smaller, but they were big too. The elephant had enormous tusks curving around so the points of them were aimed at his own body. His skin was a pale grey, covered with old scars. Dammit, he looked ancient—old and beat-up and being hustled into permanent retirement by those wolves." Mr. Y shuddered.

"What happened?"

"The elephant and wolves—which were clinging by then to his trunk and tail and ears—stumbled straight into the swamp, which seemed terribly sticky. It trapped them. They couldn't get out. They bellowed and howled and floundered deeper and deeper . . ."

"Yes?"

"That elephant. I'm positive that it knew it was old; and it wanted to die there in the swamp, fighting its enemies. I watched until suddenly I knew that an enemy was watching *me*. I turned and to

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my left, up on a ledge just over my head, an enormous mountain lion with fangs crouched, aiming itself at me. It snarled through those fangs and leapt."

He seemed to have come to a full stop. "And?" I said.

"Then I was looking at a smaller green cat. It was a statue, perched crouching on a rock over the roadway in Central Park. I'd never seen it before."

"I know that statue well," I said. "It's a cougar, but I think you thought you saw a sabre tooth tiger. Have you been to the Museum of Natural History, or seen reproductions of Knight's pictures of the La Brea tar pits?"

"No."

"You probably have. The scenes of death and destruction impressed themselves on your unconscious, and the cougar statue, like the robin, triggered off another hypnagogic hallucination."

"But retirement is death for me! Maybe it would cure me if I took a job. An old business pal of mine retired a couple of years ago and sank his capital into an elegant midtown restaurant. He jokes with me about his problem of getting dignified help. Right now he needs a maitre'd'—and I've always wanted to be one."

"Um. Possibly your problems of ego gratification and power needs should be analyzed . . . ."

"First I'll take the job. My wife will just have to adapt."

So he did, and she did, and we finished the analysis by the next winter.

["I hope you analyzed the anal implications of those hypnagogic hallucinations," said a Freudian.

"*I* hope you noticed that Mr. Y is working himself forward in evolution—first the Jurassic and then the Pleistocene," said the Interpersonal.]

Odd you should remark on that [said the Oldest Member, caressing his moustache], since Mr. Y called for an emergency appointment this morning. As it happened, I had cancelled all my regular appointments because my wife and I intended to look at a house in the country, but my car's transmission wouldn't work right when they brought it up from our basement garage. I went back upstairs to tell my wife and the telephone rang. My wife was somewhat peeved when I naturally cancelled the trip so I could see a needy patient, rather than having the transmission fixed.

["Naturally," murmured several Pshrinks.]

Mr. Y ran to my couch. "I'm hallucinating again and I thought I was cured! I love my job, I feel great, my wife enjoys our Sunday

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walk in the park, and there haven't been any time-warps, until I walked into the park this morning. It's your fault, Doc. My Unconscious must have gone to work as soon as I looked up at your building across the park. I started thinking about you and me in the same age group and bang, there I was in the past again!"

"It's not Sunday so your wife wasn't with you?"

"No, it's such a beautiful day I went in by myself, on my way across to Fifth, where I get a bus for my restaurant. When I passed by Belvedere Castle there was a maiden dressed in medieval costume waving from a window, and I could hear a stringed instrument playing a plaintive song. The castle looked new, and the jester in lounging in its doorway wore a belled, pointed hat and upcurled shoes. I ran to Fifth and called you from a street phone. Here I am—should I go to a hospital?"

I stood up from my chair. "We will go into the park."

"But it's 1000 A.D. there—unless I'll be moved up to the French and Indian wars or maybe Napoleon. . . ."

"We will investigate," I said. And we walked over to Belvedere Lake with its backdrop of rock outcropping on which is perched the miniature stone castle.

Mr. Y was right. There was a maiden in the tower and a jester in the doorway.

["Come now—folie á deux?" said a Pshrink.

"Folly of cinema, I suspect," said the Interpersonal.]

You are correct. A camera crew was in the bushes filming the scene as part of this summer's Shakespeare festival which, as you know, has been getting stranger every year.

Mr. Y, ecstatic, balanced his checkbook on a rock while he wrote out my fee for a full session, which he insisted he had had. Then he bounded off to Central Park West to tell his wife before he went on down to work. He acted like a young squirt in love with life.

It was a highly satisfactory ending to a difficult case. If any of you wish me to discuss the more Freudian aspects of the psychodynamics, I will be glad to explain in detail . . .

In a cloud of muttered apologies, the assembled Pshrinks rose as one and headed for the exit. All but the Interpersonal, who sat watching the Oldest Member moodily gather up the leftover Chocolate Cathected Cookies.

"If the case satisfied you, why the continued look of perturbation?" she said. "If you tell me what's wrong, I promise not to tell anyone in your camp or mine."

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"I suppose I need catharsis," said the Oldest Member dejectedly. "I have outlived all my own Pshrinks, and I shudder to think what my Freudian friends would say about the time-warp *I* found in Central Park today."

"Perhaps all of us go into the past on some level of consciousness under certain conditions, particularly when aggravated by intimations of mortality as symbolized in incipient retirement," said the Interpersonal in her best analytic tones.

He eyed her suspiciously. "Are you trying to be an intuitive smartass?"

"I can't help it," said the Interpersonal modestly.

"Then shut up and listen. What happened was that as Mr. Y started home to the west, I went east, intending to stop at my office before coming here for lunch. I sat down near King Jagiello's statue—the equestrian one at the east end of Belvedere Lake—because I needed to think and it was hot walking. I could feel the vibration of the construction, over the hill just in back of the statue, where that bronze cougar sits facing the road . . . ."

"I know."

"There I was, sitting in the sun like a senior citizen, brooding about getting the car fixed so my wife and I could examine that house—which I suppose will be better to retire to than one of the blasted retirement colonies, her first idea—when suddenly I heard a voice yelling at me."

"Whose?"

"His. Jagiello. I opened my eyes to see him galloping across an unknown plain toward me, his two swords raised over his head, looking ferocious."

"Ordinarily he's quite handsome. What did he say?"

" 'Death to aggressors! Get out of my territory or prepare to meet your doom!' "

"In English?"

"Polish with a heavy Lithuanian accent. Would you believe that I found myself shouting back, in a mixture of Polish and Yiddish, 'I belong here! God will get you for this!' "

"I believe it."

"Then Jagiello scowled down at me—somehow the huge horse had stopped, with knee pressure, I presume—and he cursed me with appalling flamboyancy, calling me a misbegotten product of miscegenation."

"No wonder," said the Interpersonal. "Since he was busy defeating the Teutonic knights at the battle of Tannenberg in 1410, he must

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have been furious at your language mixture. I suppose your family—"

"Was a mixture," said the Oldest Member. "My grandmother, now that I recall, had a strong Lithuanian accent. Perhaps my unresolved oedi—"

"Pooey," said the Interpersonal. "Just stay away from the Park's statue of Alice and her Wonderland cohort until the construction vibration stops creating time-warps. The real past is one thing, but the thought of falling down a literary rabbit-hole rouses my incipient claustrophobia."

"My spouse ignores the claustrophobic aspects of retirement—which you are much too young to understand."

"*My* spouse keeps making noises about how I've been working as a Pshrink long enough!"

The Oldest Member patted the Interpersonal's shoulder. "Never mind. Let's go spit at King Jagiello on the way back to our offices."

"Okay. I'd like to risk time-warp trauma. Anyway, I firmly believe that archaeopteryx *was* purple."

"It's too late to find out," said the Oldest Member. "I think that both of us have decided to take my patient's recipe for cure. We're not going to retire."

The Interpersonal smiled.

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THE GONGS OF GANYMEDE
Martin Gardner

Old cults seldom die. They have a way of rising from their ashes like the fabled Phoenix. Thus it was that in the mid-twenty-first century—by a pleasant coincidence it was in Phoenix, Arizona—the ancient Greek Pythagorean Brotherhood was revived by Dr. Matrix III, great grandson of the famous numerologist.

In the year 2053, Dr. Matrix III and several hundred members of his Church of Pythagorology emigrated to Ganymede, Jupiter's largest moon. Indeed, it is the largest in the solar system, exceeding even Saturn's Titan, though it is considerably less dense. At the center of a large crater (which Dr. Matrix III named Iva in honor of his great grandmother) the Church established its base under an enormous geodesic dome.

Ganymede was selected not only because of its size but because of its extraordinary "resonance lock" with two sister satellites, the giant moons Io and Europa. Ganymede orbits Jupiter in about one Earth-week. Europa makes the circuit in exactly half of Ganymede's time, and Io in exactly half of Europa's time. This lock of ratio 1:2:4 is the only triple lock known for three astronomical bodies. Because patterns of natural numbers are at the heart of Pythagorology, Ganymede seemed an ideal spot for the colony.

At the age of 21 Earth-years (21 being the sum of the squares of 1, 2, and 4) every man and woman in the colony is required to make a ceremonial journey around the inside of the crater's rim. The length of the circular path is exactly 21 kilometers. Spaced at integral distances (in kilometers) along this path are five large statues of eagles. They commemorate the great eagle who carried Ganymede, a beautiful Trojan youth, to Mount Olympus where he became cup-bearer to the gods. One eagle is gold, the other four are bronze. Beside each eagle is a small dome where the walker can obtain food and a night's lodging. Inside each dome is an enormous brass gong.

The ceremonial walk begins at the gold eagle. If the walker is male, he travels clockwise around the path. At the first bronze eagle he stops, enters the dome, and strikes the gong as many times as the number of kilometers he has just walked. While the sounds reverberate, he meditates on the secret Pythagorean significance of that number. He then proceeds to the next eagle where he again hits the gong as many times as the kilometers he has traveled from

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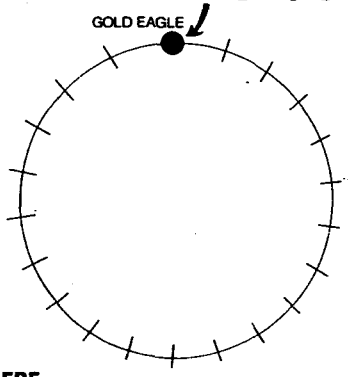
the last eagle, while he meditates on this second number. The ritual is repeated at each eagle until he returns to the gold statue where he started. He will have struck five gongs and meditated on five different integers.

The man now begins the second phase of his walk by continuing clockwise, but this time he stops at every *second* eagle. As before, he strikes the gong as many times as the number of kilometers just walked. Two circuits around the path return him to the gold eagle. He will have hit each gong once and meditated on five more numbers, none duplicating a previous one. On the third phase of his walk, he stops at every *third* eagle, following the same procedure. This brings him back to the gold statue after three circuits. Next he stops at every *fourth* eagle, returning to the gold eagle after four circuits. A fifth and final walk takes him just once around the path to the fifth statue, which of course is the gold one. There he hits the gong 21 times while meditating on the beauty and mystery of 21.

The five eagles are cleverly placed. When the man has completed eleven circuits he will have honored every integer from 1 through 21, though not in consecutive order. Women who make the walk must travel counterclockwise. Males take the retrograde direction of Jupiter's outermost moons. Females follow the direction of Ganymede, Europa, and Io, the innermost of the Big Four—the giant Galilean moons discovered by Galileo.

There is one and only one way (not counting a mirror reversal as different) to place the five eagles so that the ceremonial walk is possible. (Of course if it works in one direction it will work in the other.) We can describe the problem as follows: Place four more points on the 21-kilometer path shown, so that every integer from 1 through 20 corresponds to a distance on the circle between two points. Can you do this without turning to page 61?



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There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

—"In Memoriam"
Alfred Lord Tennyson

This is part of a series of
essays, Adventures in Unhistory,
from the white-bearded Mr. Davidson.

Many mysteries have come down from ancient times without much abatement of the mystery, let alone any solution having been found. We still do not really know how the statue called the Vocal Memnon sang at the break of dawn each day for hundreds of years, and then fell silent: we only know that it did sing . . . and that it did fall silent. The mystery of the Oracle of Delphi remains unsolved; neither do we know in what manner the ancient Egyptians built the immense pyramids at Gizeh. The pyramids, however, are more than merely famous; they are literally known to everyone, and they are still there. The statue of the Vocal Memnon, silent for millennia, is at any rate still there; and on its base, and still there on its base, are the graffiti of those who had heard it sing. The song is silent, but the statue is present. Among the less well-known mysteries, however, is the secret of Hyperborea. Modern scholars have spent little time in trying to solve it. Humboldt called it "a meteorological myth," and Dempsey has said that there was no mystery at all, referring us to Ahrens, whose involved and complicated explanations are to the effect that the ancient Greeks made several mistakes in their own language—mistakes which Ahrens, who evidently knew ancient Greek better than the ancient Greeks did, has solved.

Maybe.

Only maybe not.

It is my own opinion that the Secret of Hyperborea was not a mere meteorological myth and that mistakes in grammar and/or the

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meanings of words are beside the point and that the secret rested upon a reasonably sound and solid basis, one so solid that we might actually hold it in our hands; and so far as I know, I am the first to suggest the solution which I will, in the course of this adventure, reveal to you. However, it may be that the very word Hyperborea and its meaning is a secret to some, although, even so, if you break the word down into its two main parts you will realize that you almost knew what the word means.

Break it down. Hyper. Borea. Everyone knows *hyper,* as in hypertension and hyperthyroid and hyperactive and hypersensitive and—

And so on.

To your dictionaries, O readers! —or, to be a trifle more realistic, to mine; in fact, to my *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* a mine of information, which tells us that *hyper-* is a prefix, from the Greek, meaning, *1: above; beyond; super-.* There are other meanings, but let us leave it at that. As for *Borea,* to be sure, *Borea* as such is not in *Webster's Collegiate,* but what is is helpful enough, to wit *boreal* and *Boreas. "bo-re-al* (. . . fr. L. *boreas* north wind, north, fr. Gk. *Boreas) 1 of, or related to, or located in northern regions. 2 cap: of, related to, or growing in northern and mountainous parts of the northern hemisphere."* Next is *Bo-re-as. (L. fr. Gk.) 1: the god of the north wind in Greek mythology; 2: the north wind personified.* And Chaucer had *that* in mind when he wrote

and *Boreas* eek with his rude breath

Thus, with very little effort, it becomes evident that Hyperborea should mean "Beyond the North Wind."

And what of it?

To someone in the latitudes of, say, St. Paul, Minnesota, it may not seem that the winters in Greece get, or got, very cold; how could they? But to people in Greece, and particularly in ancient Greece, huddling in their clammy chlamyses or chitons round about a charcoal brazier, —or, if they were boys in Sparta where they believed in toughening them up, marching bare-ass naked through the snowy streets to school, —it got *very* cold in the winter. What pleasing and one might say wistful thoughts, then, were conjured up to hear the harpist, blind or otherwise, chant the words of the poet Pindar, that Theban eagle, as the poet Pope called him, of

. . . the feast of the Hyperboreans . . . [where]
. . . Never the Muse is absent
from their ways: lyres clash, and flutes cry,
and everywhere maiden choruses whirling.

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They bind their hair in golden laurel and take their holiday.
Neither disease nor bitter old age is mixed
in their sacred blood; far from labor and battle
they live; they escape Nemesis
the overjust. [. . .] those blessed men.*

Well, this certainly sounds like some people are having a fine time, partying, and leading the good, one might say the more abundant life! But the root of the matter is summed up for us by a writer much later than Pindar, Diodorus Siculus, or Diodorus of Sicily, who spoke of an "island . . . situated in the north . . . inhabited by the Hyperboreans, who are called by that name because *their home is beyond the point whence the north wind blows . . . .*" Diodorus lived in the last century before the Christian era and was called a universal historian; living in the first century of the Christian era and possessed of an even more encyclopedic knowledge, was the famous Pliny the Elder, whose motto was or seemed to be, "Write it down!" Pliny had a bit to say on the subject, but for now I quote only a bit of that bit, to wit, *"The country of the Hyperboreans is of a blissful and pleasant temperature."*

It is easy to understand why and how those dwelling in the oft-frozen north should believe that there was a place deserving to be called blessed and of a blissful and pleasant temperature and lying far to the *south;* this notion still persists, and northerners in their thousands come looking for the blessed people south of the Tropic of Cancer, looking for the balmy breezes and the coconut palm treeses along with the white sands and the warm-hearted romantic native girls and boys; the inexpensive standards of living and *the scented breeze / the bird-delighting citron trees* . . . and . . . and so on . . . and never mind that in addition to giving you a warm welcome the picturesque natives are as likely to give you a warm clap, and perhaps something warmer and worse, to steal everything not nailed down and sometimes everything that is, nails and all—all beside the point.

What is not easy to understand, not at all easy to understand, is why the Greeks, who after all must have known as a rough rule of thumb that the farther north you go (in the northern hemisphere, that is) the colder it gets—why did they think that there was a place, an island if you like, where the climate was "blissful and pleasant" despite the fact that it lay far to the *north?* The explanation of this paradox, if I am correct, is the *real* secret of Hyper-

*Pythia 10: from *The Odes of Pindar*, tr. Richard Lattimore, Chicago 1947. See Notes at end of story.

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borea; and let us see if we can solve it. The basic explanation of course lies in the name *Hyperborea;* but the explanation, perhaps so easy to the ancient ancients, that the climate was warm because it lay beyond, that is, on the other side of, the source of the cold, that is to say the north wind, is unacceptable to us. *The north wind shall blow, and we shall have snow,* were the words of a song on the very first phonograph record which I can remember having heard; it is an axiom; and *we* know, even if the ancient Greeks did not, that there is no one place that can be called "the point whence the north wind blows," because the north wind blows from everywhere in the north, and the norther you go the more it blows, and the colder it becomes.

What gave the ancient Greeks such a contrary notion?

It was customary to dismiss the matter very simply, thus: The proto-Greeks came into what became known as Greece from the comparative south, and to these pioneers the far north was represented by the land of Thrace, north and west of Macedonia: this seemed to them in their ignorance the source of the north wind and they, being primitive and having no knowledge of the real nature of the weather and giving a mythological explanation to everything, assumed that the land north of Thrace must be warm in the winter. And when, by and by, they ventured north into Thrace and discovered that it was *not* warm in the winter there, why, they simply so to speak moved the source of the north wind—

—farther north.

As Humboldt, that genuinely great scientist and explorer of the early 19th century, who after all genuinely knew something about climate zones, considered the matter, the legend of Hyperborea was "a meteorological myth." A myth about the wind . . . and the weather. But even Homer sometimes nods; that is, not that he nods consent, but sometimes his head nods and he drops off to sleep and hence he sometimes makes mistakes; just so, so does, sometimes, Humboldt. We are a hundred and fifty years past Humboldt and do not by any means always accept what he found scientific; Noah was a righteous man in his generation and Humboldt was a scientific man in his; was he correct, then, in dismissing in their entirety these notions of the ancient, not only the classical but the pre-classical, Greeks, who at any rate in the days about which blind Homer harped and sang of burning Troy seemed to sum up their notions of meteorology in the idea that all the winds of the world could be contained in a bag, would you believe it, and that Ulysses by unwisely opening said bag, rather like Pandora opening the urn of

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troubles, caused one immense hell of a storm? *Was* Humboldt right? Maybe. Only maybe not.

Old ancient Aristeas, the poet, strikes a note which, almost two thousand years later, is echoed by John Milton; Aristeas writes that, far to the north, is the land of the "gold-guarding griffins," whose gold is sometimes stolen, despite their guardianship, by a race of one-eyed peoples called Arismaspians: *next to them,* says he, live the Hyperboreans. Gold, like fools, can be found anywhere, so this is not much of a hint; who else was one-eyed? Odin was, who gave one of his eyes in order to obtain wisdom. *He lived in the far north.* Keep the Arimaspians in mind.

Herodotus—the Father of History: remember him? —tells us something else about Apollo and the Hyperboreans. There was, besides Delphi, another great place sacred to Apollo. This was on the Greek island of Delos. Do not confuse them. To Delos, according to Herodotus, thither the Hyperboreans sent offerings. Originally these had been brought by four young women. But the young women had not returned . . . perhaps indicating that the mysterious northern land, despite its delightful climate, etc., somehow lacked something which Greece possessed . . . perhaps. And perhaps the Greeks had a word for it; but, if so, we do not know what it was. At any rate, the Hyperboreans took no further chances; they continued to send offerings, nicely wrapped in wheat-straw—but they took them only so far, and then cautiously handed them to some other people living not so far away from them. Who were they? The Arimaspians, who else. "Offerings for Apollo at Delos; pass it on," was in effect what the Hyperboreans said.*

Now up comes a Roman writer, or to be a bit specific, a Spanish writer who wrote in Latin and in Roman times, namely Pomponius Mela; he tells us something he would not have dared have told skeptical old Father Herodotus, viz. that in the land of the Hyperboreans the day is six months long! And so is the night! Isn't that incredible? No wonder poor old Pomponius's reputation did not exactly shine back in former times, telling big fibs like that . . . All my sarcasm of course cannot obscure the fact that if this is not a genuine reference to the Arctic Circle, then what *is* it? This would seem to give us a better geographical clue to Hyperborea than most, but it gives us even more to wonder why and how anyone could believe there was a warm, mild climate, presumably all year round, way up there. Way up North.

*See Notes at end of story.

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The voyage of the Argonauts took place before the time of Homer, whenever time that was; and according to one early account they might conceivably, in modern terms, have circumnavigated Africa, as we call it now. Fascinating as this version is, it is not the one which concerns us here. There certainly are others, (and here, chiefly for the sake of brevity, I quote a recent edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), "And others, like Sophocles, described the return voyage as . . . taking the northern instead of the southern shore of the Euxine [Black Sea]. Some . . . supposed that the Argonauts had sailed up the river Tanais [the Don, which flows into the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea], passed into another river, and by it reached the North Sea, returning to the Mediterranean by the Pillars of Hercules. Again, others (Appolonius Rhodius) laid down the course as up the Danube (Ister), from it into the Adriatic by a supposed mouth of that river, and on to Corcyra [modern Corfu]." And the *EB* says, "The story of the expedition is very old." It is old enough for us to assume, without even going into it very deeply, that the story of the expedition is the story of several expeditions, whose tales became confused and conflated too long ago ever to get straightened out. And on this assumption, let us consider the matter thus: dating from the time when the Greeks were confined to a rather small portion of the Mediterranean and had barely begun the penetration of the Black Sea, we have accounts of journeys made up rivers into eastern and central Europe and, in one case, into the arm of one of the great northern seas: what does this mean?

It means, I think, and I can only think, that in very early ancient times, either Greeks or some people or peoples known to anyway some of the Greeks, did perform just such voyages. In fact, I will say that it is accepted, if not universally accepted, that just such voyages were made, and were made fairly often; so that is not the question; the question is, which way were such voyages made? And the answer is, that they were made both ways.

Coming and going.

As time went on the Greeks in fact established colonies far afield from Greece, Southern Italy becoming known as Magna Graecia, or Great Greece, or, perhaps, Greater Greece, as the British Isles and their own colonies were sometimes known not only as Great Britain but as "Great and Greater Britain." The Greeks in fact established colonies all over the northern and the southern shores of the Mediterranean as well as the northern and southern shores of the Black Sea; and these colonies were usually established, perhaps always established, after consultation with an oracle: usually the Oracle

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at Delphi, which was the oracle of Apollo, whose name is inseparable from that of Hyperborea. But no Greek colonies were ever established far up the rivers of eastern or central, let alone western, Europe. And none, certainly, were ever established along or anywhere near the northern seas.

If Greeks did not themselves, or did not themselves alone, perform such voyages, then who did? In the terms of our Adventure, we may venture to suggest, perhaps the Hyperboreans. In terms of a form of history not concerned with our concern, we must ask another and a previous question; for what purpose were such voyages made? Not for colonization, we have seen. We may say, not for war, for there are no echoes of such wars. For pilgrimage purposes? To the shrines and the temples of Apollo? Not unlikely. Anything else? For what purposes, or for what other purposes, are long voyages most usually made? There were few tourists in the ancient world. The obvious answer, then, is, for trade. We are accustomed to think that trade by sea was introduced to the Greeks by the Phoenicians; however, it is certain that it was not the Phoenicians who went up and down the great rivers and valleys of inner Europe. They brought glassware and cloth dyed purple from their own homeland; they may have brought papyrus from Egypt and cedarwood from Lebanon; at only slightly later dates silver and lead from Spain were among their cargoes; olive oil certainly, eventually tin from the Cassiterides, the Tin Islands (formerly thought to be Cornwall, in Britain, now more generally believed to be the Scilly Isles, off the Cornish coasts). They carried grain from wherever grain was in surplus to wherever it was in short supply.

But none of these items fit into the scheme of things as far as the very earliest trade routes from northern Europe are concerned, and so we must ask, what did? Is there an answer? There would seem to be. I shall refer now to a modern authority, one Arnold Spekke, Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy, and formerly Professor at the University of Latvia; the title of his book is *Ancient Amber Routes and the Geographical Discovery of the Eastern Baltic* ("Published by M. Goppers," [whose company also bears the wonderful name of "Zelta Abele—The Golden Appletree"!], "Stockholm, MCMLVII.") Spekke's book was published in English, in Sweden; Sweden and Australia being the chief centers of Latvian publishing outside of Latvia since the Second World War. He says, after a review of old European lines of commerce, "Two other *prehistoric* [italics mine] routes remain to be studied. One along the coast of the Netherlands, up the Rhine and down the Rhone into the Med-

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iterranean, discovered by finds of Amber and of Bronze, and probably in use in the Early Bronze Age.

"Then there is the sea route by Gades and the Straits of Gibraltar, a great neolithic highway, as Miss [J.R.] Bacon points out, but little used for Amber, finds of it being 'scarce and sporadic.' " —That is the route in which we are *not* interested right now. "This learned writer [i.e., Miss Bacon], in her delightful book on 'The Voyages of the Argonauts,'* asks the question whether it can possibly be a mere coincidence that 'The Argonauts in one account or another are credited with traveling by all the Amber routes, or by routes so like them as to be probably garbled versions of the same trade highways.'

"She shows that it is hardly possible to entertain the idea of a 'fourfold coincidence,' and then goes on to prove, as I am disposed to believe, her contention that such statements have a basis of truth, and that the Amber routes are virtually identical with those . . . described as the 'Voyages of Argo.' "

Amber is the resinous gum of a certain kind of pine tree, or, perhaps I should say, of certain kinds of pine trees. There are, however, certain differences between amber and other kinds of resinous gums. I recall that spruce gum for chewing used to be available, packaged in slices, from the State of Maine; and maybe it still is. Chicle is another tree gum, though not a resinous one. Unlike spruce gum, however, and chicle—the gum of the sapodilla tree of Central America—one cannot *chew* amber. It is hard. It is very hard. In fact, it is almost as hard as stone. Amber, in fact, is a fossilized gum. Amber, in fact, and in effect, is a jewel.

Now, most jewels are stones, hence the terms precious or semi-precious stones. There are exceptions; one exception is the pearl. I suppose that everybody knows that the pearl-stone is produced by certain species of oysters, mostly (or, sometimes, the mussel, another sort of shellfish). In brief, a grain of sand finds its way into an oyster, the oyster finds this uncomfortable; and just as a grain of sand causes the eye to water, so it causes, so to speak, the oyster to water: or, at any rate, to secrete a liquid substance which gathers around the grain of sand. Successive build-ups of this secretion harden, one after the other; and the final result is the pearl. It is, or it seems to be, hard as stone; but it is not. It is, like amber, organic in origin; and, unlike amber, it can decay. Pearls are still being produced, almost before our eyes; but amber is not. Amber in fact is never produced before our eyes; amber is *found*. Amber is found in many

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places, but in most places it is found in small quantities and its quality is seldom of the best. The most and the best comes from one area only. We will see where.

Professor Spekke says, quite correctly, that "Homer . . . mentions amber in several places, usually in connection with gold. [. . .] . . . the gift given to the faithful Penelope by her admirer—a necklace of amber and gold," and, Homer says, it was "like the Sun." Remember that phrase.

Then, somewhere within the approximate dates of the 5th century before the Christian Era, came the calm, cool, usually skeptical presence of Herodotus. It was rather unusual for anyone in that early period to be systematically skeptical; and if the skepticism of Herodotus sometimes led him into what we now know to be errors, well, it served a good purpose nonetheless. Listen to his voice as he discusses, not mythology but geography: "Concerning the western extremities of Europe I am unable to speak with certainty, for I do not admit that there is a river . . . which discharges itself into the sea towards the north, [and] from which amber is said to come . . . though I have diligently enquired, I have never been able to hear from any man who has himself seen it, that there is a sea on that side of Europe." That is, although he knew there was a sea on the *western* side of Europe, and spoke to people who had sailed on it, no such information was available to him about the *northern* side, or sides, of Europe. Therefore, he sensibly chose not to believe in it. If amber did not come from there, then where did it come from? Herodotus said in effect that this was not his problem.

Herodotus was a Greek from the eastern Mediterranean; another Greek writer, Pytheas, who lived circa the 4th century B.C., was from the western Mediterranean, from the Greek colony at Massalia, which we call Marseilles, at or near the mouth of the river Rhône. He traveled west, he traveled north, or perhaps the other way around, he told many an easily-detected whopper, such as trying to sail through a sea full of slushy ice: who could believe it? Nevertheless and nowadays, we *do* believe it; we do not know where, exactly, the farthermost land of Ultima Thule may have been—Norway? the Shetland Islands? Iceland?—but we now believe, or some of us now believe, along with the scholarly writer Hennig, "quoted repeatedly" by Spekke, that "Pytheas's journey may have had close connections with the amber trade routes of the Rhône, the Rhine, and perhaps also the Elbe" —these last two being certainly each one "a river which discharges itself into the sea towards the north." Hennig says further that ". . . the amber routes went from

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the lower part of the river Elbe to the Rhine . . . and afterwards the river Rhône, splitting into two branches in the middle course of this river, one of them going up the Elbe and after passing the Alps at the Brenner Pass, followed the Adige in the direction of the northern shores of the Adriatic." Now, not only is the Adriatic Sea an arm of the Mediterranean, it is just there that the perhaps-not-so-mythical voyage of the Argonauts, after going up and down many an unnamed river, reached a place absolutely identifiable in location by geography. Spekke and Hennig were not trying to trace either the Hyperboreans or the Argonauts, *I* am trying to trace them: and if indeed the Argonauts had some connection with the long, long way whereby amber came from the chill north to the warm south, across a forest of continent mostly unknown in those distant days, then perhaps we are just a little bit closer to the conclusion of our mystery . . . or secret . . .

. . . the secret of Hyperborea.

Trade routes do not always remain open. Trade routes sometimes close. There are many reasons for this. America was discovered by people trying to find a new trade route because the old one was so often closed. Pindar, the olden Greek poet, speaking of what he called "the marvelous road to the land of the Hyperboreans," said that it could not be found either by land or sea; and perhaps this was because this marvelous road had been closed by tribal wars, as the famous Silk Road across Asia was later to be closed; and perhaps even the knowledge of the ancient way thither, thither to Hyperborea, had been lost in consequence. Perhaps. But as for, meanwhile, amber—

Amber comes in many colors; the best and best-known of it ranges from yellow to red. If Homer compared it to the sun, Demostratus seems to have a less glorious comparison in mind: he said it was the solidified urine of the lynx, or bobcat. Sudines only partly agreed; Sudines said that "lynx" in this case was the name of a tree: and in saying that amber came from trees Sudines was dead right. But what about the authority of one Sotacus? *He* said it was his opinion that amber "exudes from certain stones": well, he was *wrong*, wasn't he? —and yet in comparing it to stone, Sotacus was also right, because amber has become a stone, it has been fossilized and petrified. We have come a long way from Sophocles, who poeticized that pieces of amber were the tears of birds. But even in concepts so far apart as the tears of birds and the urine of bobcats there is a unifying truth: amber had indeed, once upon a time, been liquid. So far, the ancients were right. They just had the wrong liquid.

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Back to Pytheas. When he was not pretending that he had seen ice where ice could simply not be, to wit on the open sea, and when he was not babbling about make-believe islands with names like Ultima Thule, what else was Pytheas saying? Well, among lots and lots of other things, Pytheas was saying that, somewhere near where the Germans lived, was an estuary, a place where a river emptied into an ocean, and that "one day's sail from this territory is the Isle of Abalus, upon the shores of which amber is thrown up by the waves in spring, it being an excretion of the sea in a concrete form; and that the inhabitants use this amber by way of fuel." And Pytheas was, in part, also right. This, then, was the northern ocean in which Herodotus did not believe; this was probably the river in which Herodotus did not believe; this was probably that source of amber in which Herodotus did not believe. Of course, amber was not exactly "an excretion of the sea in a concrete form," but it was indeed thrown up by the waves in spring . . . exceedingly odd as that may sound. And while it is certainly unlikely that it was used as fuel, and why would it have been when the same waves throw up driftwood? it is certainly true that amber may be burned: hence its name of *bernstein,* or burnstone. Try it and see. Or, rather, don't. Amber is much too valuable to burn. Content yourself with bringing it near a flame. Just warm it. Then smell it. You will smell the resinous odor of the pine-gum from which amber was made . . . made, of course, by nature. Long, long ago.

And still the ancients, the later ancients, so to speak, were not done discussing this marvelous substance, in one way hard as stone, in other ways so different from other stones, so satisfactory to carve that all sorts of things were carved from it; things such as animals and ornaments; which, found in the ground along those rivers we have named, found already wrought by the hand of man and found in areas where amber in the raw is never found, demonstrate as plain as day the existence in ancient times of routes or roads whereby amber passed from north to south . . . still the ancients were not done talking of it: Philemon said that this glowing substance, clear as glass, sometimes red as blood and sometimes yellow as gold, yellow as the sun, yellow as the hair of Apollo the sun-god; Philemon said that it was "a fossil substance. . . ." And, of course, Philemon was also right.

Philemon called it *electrum* ("bright, beaming as the sun"), and he further said that "in Egypt it was called *sacal,*" and so it was; and this is most interesting, because in Livonia (that is, Latvia), it is called *saca,* and it is much likelier that this word passed from

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Livonia in the north to Egypt in the south than the other way around, seeing that it is found in Livonia and that it is not found in Egypt. It shows, also, that not only did the substance itself pass from north to south, but at least once, its very name passed along with it. And, to quote Philemon once more, before we leave him forever, he said that it attracted straw . . . and so it did . . . and so it does . . . and so it does. . . .

As for the Isle of Abalus, could this have been the Island of Heligoland, in the North Sea?

Perhaps.

Sooner or later of course we come back to old Pliny, and I should like to give you a picture of old Pliny as I have formed it over the years. He is in his litter, and you are not to imagine this as a mere stretcher, such as is used to carry wounded; his litter is rather like a small movable room, with curtains and cushions; probably some flasks of wine inasmuch as everybody knows that too much straight water is bad for the kidneys (and coffee or tea were not then known). On the other end of the litter, which is being carried, or borne, by a team of men called litter-bearers, is his secretary. "Secretary" means, by the way, the man who keeps the secrets. He was probably a combination lector, or reader, and amanuensis, or copyist. It could not have been the easiest job in the world, but the one holding it was probably a Greek slave and didn't have too much choice in the matter, Greece being a conquered country. And by the secretary's side is a basket somewhat like a fishing creel, full of the latest scrolls from the circulating library. So to speak. Pliny is giving an order. He has just finished his term as governor of, say, Caesarea Hippopotamus or Augusta Oblongata, and is on route to assume command of the 3rd sub-Legion or the 4th Fleet, this not being an age of specialization.

Pliny is saying, " '. . . and all men are to be supplied with a new issue of sandals and any man found selling same will receive 30 lashes;' got that?"

The secretary, who has been hastily scribbling in the wax surface of his tablet, a sort of notebook, with his stylus, a sort of pen, says, "Yes, Colonel Pliny."

Pliny stretches, breaks wind, rinses his mouth with wine and water, spits out the side of his litter; if it hits any of the litter-bearers, too bad, teach *them* to take the wrong side in the next war. "All right," he says, "that's that for the orders-of-the-day, now where were we in m' Natural History? *Glue,* wasn't it?"

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The secretary neatly stows away his tablets and reaches for one of the scrolls. "Quite right, Colonel Pliny. However," he adds, tactfully, "I believe that we finished glue *last* week. *This* week we are doing amber. I believe."

Pliny gives a vigorous nod. "Oh yes, *Am*ber. I remember now. Amber. *Very* well. Read me what you've got, no, not all of it, just the last few bits of it. Where we left off. *Start.*"

And the secretary starts, with, " 'But the one thing that has surpassed them all is Sophocles, the tragic poet—' "

"Miserable stupid penny-a-line rhymester!" exclaims Pliny, in a burst of temper. "Man didn't have the sense the gods gave piss-ants! Go on."

" '. . . poet; a thing that indeed surprises me, when I only consider the surpassing gravity of his lofty style, the high repute that he enjoyed in life, his elevated position by birth in Athens, his various exploits, and his high military command. According to him, amber is produced in the countries beyond India, from the tears that are shed for Meleager, by the birds called *meleagrides*. Who can be otherwise than surprised that he should have believed such a thing as this, or have hoped to persuade others to believe it? What child, too, could possibly be found in such a state of ignorance as to believe that birds weep once a year, that their tears are so prolific as this, or that they go all the way from Greece, where Meleager died, to India to weep? . . . for a person seriously to advance such an absurdity with reference to a thing so common as amber, which is imported every day and so easily proves the mendacity of this assertion, is neither more nor less than to evince a supreme contempt for the opinions of mankind, and to assert with impunity an intolerable falsehood. . . .' "

Pliny nods. "Quite right. And, ah, what was that where Ctesias says . . . eh?"

And the secretary reads on: " '. . . a river called Hypobarus . . . that this river flows from the north into the Eastern Ocean, where it discharges itself near a mountain covered with trees which produce *electrum*—' "

Pliny says, "Which means amber. All right. Get a nice clean tablet and write this down. Ready? Good. Herumph. 'There can be no doubt that amber is a product of the islands of the Northern Ocean. . . . Amber is produced from a marrow discharged by trees belonging to the pine genus, like gum from the cherry tree; and resin from the ordinary pine. It is liquid at first, which issues forth in considerable quantities, and is gradually hardened by heat or cold, or else by the

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action of the sea, when the rise of the tide carries off the fragments from the shores of these islands. At all events, it is thrown up on the coasts . . . and one great proof that it is the product of a tree of the pine genus is the fact that it emits a pine-like smell when rubbed, and that it burns, when ignited, with the odor and appearance of torch-pine wood;' what's all that commotion? *Centurion!*"

The centurion came forward, dragging some wretched fellow in native dress. "We caught this fellow, sir, and think he's a spy; but he denies it."

"Of course he denies it. Let's see if he denies it after he's gotten 30 lashes. Give him 30 lashes, Centurion. We'll take a ten-minute break while you do it. And you, Amanuensis, get a nice clean tablet and prepare to write this down. —All right, you, fellow, let's have the names of all the tribes in the area, in alphabetical order; you can talk while you're being flogged; eh, Centurion?"

"Yes, Colonel Pliny."

Or, at any rate, that is how I imagine it. Pliny's nephew, usually called Pliny the Younger, some years later took time off from suppressing a local nut-cult called Christianity, or something like that, to describe his uncle's last days. It was in a place called Pompeii, of which some of you may have heard. Old Pliny was leading people to safety, with a pillow over his head to ward off falling sparks, when he sat down for a moment on a rock to catch his breath. And died. I rather imagine that his last words were, "*Write this down . . .*" As to those not-quite-last words of his about amber which I have just quoted above, they are almost all of them the absolute truth.

Evidence of his truthfulness and accuracy lies in these words: *"One more great proof that amber must have been originally in a liquid state, is the fact that, owing to its transparency, certain objects are to be seen within it: ants, for example, gnats, and lizards. These no doubt, must have first adhered to it while it was still liquid, and then, upon its hardening, have remained enclosed within."* I hope you will all remember these words. If our old friend dismisses, in his account of the far northern lands whence amber comes, the report that "the blaze of glory round the head of the god is palpable to the sight"; if the old man dismisses this as "vulgar credulity," well, it is indeed hard to credit the aurora borealis when you haven't seen it. He winds up one of his much-beloved lists of tribes by mentioning the *Suiones,* up there in the mysterious north, "where, it is generally believed, the boundaries of nature terminate" —could the

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Suiones have been the *Suomis,* the name which the Finns give themselves in their own language? Pliny does not pause to ask, nor to answer; he goes on briskly to say that, "Beyond the Suiones, we next find the nation of the Sitones, differing in nothing from the former, except the tameness with which they suffer a woman to reign over them. Of this people, it is not enough to say, that they have degenerated from civil liberty; they are sunk below slavery itself." M.C.P.

Perhaps by this time you have come to the conclusion that "the Northern Ocean," on the shores of which amber was gathered, was in fact what we now call the Baltic Sea. And, by and large, to the extent that it is still being gathered, most of it is still being gathered *there.* Why did it take so long for this fact to become known? Because it took so long for the sea itself to become known, known, that is, officially and exactly: it took the Romans half-way through the first century of the Christian Era to discover the Baltic Sea; the Balts, of course, had discovered it long ago.

If I had time and a map, I could show you the various later amber routes between from the most part the Baltic down into the Mediterranean. Mostly these followed the great river valleys of Europe: the Elbe, the Rhine, the Rhône, all in the west; the Vistula, the Dniester, the Dnieper, and the Don, all in the east; with the trade of these last ones proceeding via the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. Where the rivers flowed in directions away from the southbound trade, the trade went overland. Until it came to another and more accommodating river. Or to the sea. *A* sea. Almost any sea would do, the Black, the Mediterranean, the Aegean, even the distant and storm-tossed Atlantic; for they all flowed one into another: *Thalassa! Thalassa!* cried the ancient Greek soldiery, as they saw the great waters, and gazed at each other with a wild surmise: *The sea! The sea!*

Did the Argonauts give this same cry, in an earlier version of the classical Greek language? Of course we do not know. I could give many another ancient strange account of strange peoples of these strange northern seas: of one which lives upon eggs and oatmeal! of one which has feet like horses . . . and I could conjecture that this may be a distortion of fur leggings or of some primitive ancestor of skis; of the island "of the Panotii, the people of which have ears of such extraordinary size as to cover the rest of the body, which is otherwise left naked": but I forebear. —although I *do* have an antic vision of a group of lusty antique Swedes and Finns running out from their antique saunas to plunge into the snows and wearing for

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some antic reason only their winter caps, with the side-flaps hanging down. . . .

I have concentrated on the river—and overland—routes to the north; but this is not to say that aspects of Hyperborea, that strange lost land Beyond the North Wind, may not have become known to the people living round about the Midland (or Mediterranean) Sea via the in many ways more perilous water-road afforded by the Atlantic: there was, for example, Pytheas, who told such lies about finding slob-ice—as it is now called—in the North Atlantic, that he was laughed to scorn for 1500 years. There were others. There was, for example, Ptolemy, not a member of the dynasty which ruled Egypt between the death of Alexander the Great and the death of Cleopatra, but Claudius Ptolemaius, the geographer and map-maker. It is unlikely that he himself ever traveled on those dark and storm-tossed seas, and it is certainly true that on his maps of the region he has Scotland pointing in exactly the wrong direction . . . something so "accurately wrong" that one suspects he was originally right and that whoever drew the map subsequently simply reversed directions there. Ptolemy mentions the northern-dwelling *Hippopodes,* the Horse-Footed Ones, whom I have also mentioned a bit earlier, the ones whom I suggested may have had hairy leggings and short skis; directly after them he gives us the name of the *Melanchlani*: and here I wish to quote someone else, someone earlier.

Strabo, who lived circa the 1st century B.C., was the greatest geographer of his day; he says that "The Cassiterides . . . lie near each other in the high sea to the north . . . inhabited by people who wear black coats. . . ." The name, *Cassiterides,* means Tin Islands; the name *Melanchlani* means Wearers of Black Cloaks. The Tin Islands lay off the coast of Britain, and it has been suggested that the Druids it was who wore black cloaks or coats. It has been so often suggested that I for one will for now agree that it might be so. We have connected them with the Black-Cloaked People, and it seems that the Black-Cloaked People were connected with Britain. What else? That there may have been a Something Else appears at least possible when we return to the words of Diodorus Siculus, who said that there was in the land of the Celts a temple "spherical in shape. The god Apollo visits it . . . he plays the cithara." Could this temple spherical in shape have been . . . *Stonehenge?* . . . "the wide and beautiful palisades . . ." Some think it might; it is really not spherical, but it really is round! And we know from Pindar and others that Apollo visited the land of the Hyperboreans, and that the cithara was played at their feasts. Cassiodorus, the King of the

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Goths, who lived in the 6th Christian century, wrote to one of the northern tribes of his time that "it is not an easy task to undertake the long journey through countries inhabited by so many different tribes." Indeed it was not, neither was it then nor had it ever been an easy task to bring back accurate descriptions, either.

Spekke, the historian whose work connects the ancient amber trade-routes with the North and Baltic Seas, speaks of "finding out exactly how and where our shores are to be linked with the geographically vast and exotic cycle of ancient beliefs. . . . How far would our curiosity lead us if we should ask where and when and how . . . in what eastern folklore their roots were set?" Too far for us, I fear. But there is still a little more. Let us go back once more, very far back, "so far he cannot call to her," and recall those sacred gifts sent by the Hyperboreans to the temples of Apollo in Greece. The Hyperboreans passed these gifts on to the Arimaspeans, who passed them on to the Scythians, and so on and so ôn. What *were* these "sacred gifts?" The fact is, that they were so sacred that we do not know. But we can try to guess. We are repeatedly told that they were "wrapped in wheat straw . . . ," which seems a rather flimsy wrapping for such an immense journey. Of all the names for amber (including *electrum,* whence our word electricity) in the ancient world, the oddest is the old Persian one: Robber of Wheat-Straw! Why was amber said to "rob" straw? Because its electromagnetic nature is such that it attracts straw to it! If the "marvelous road to the land of the Hyperboreans" was indeed the old amber trade-route, then what more natural than that the sacred gifts sent from Hyperborea were either made of amber or consisted of choice chunks of raw amber itself? What more natural than that the sun-colored amber was sacred to the sun-god Apollo himself? —whose yellow hair was the sun's own nimbus?

More? Here is more. The Hyperboreans handed the sacred gifts over to the Arimaspeans to convey along the first stage of the marvelous road; the sacred journey down into sacred Greece. When I read this an electric shock passed through me, for I knew that I had passed one giant step closer to the solution of the secret of Hyperborea. Let us forget for the moment how the Arimaspeans had but one eye, let us concentrate upon the fact that it was the Arimaspeans who robbed the griffins of the gold the griffins guarded . . . the marvelous gold which was mined, so to speak, by the ants which threw up the gold-bearing sand as they built their ant-hills.

Gold!

Ants!

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Sturdy old Pliny, what did he say? ". . . owing to [amber's] transparency, certain objects are to be seen within it: *ants, for example* . . ." When the gum of the amber-pine trees was oozing freshly down the sides of the tree, ants, casually crawling along the trunk, were engulfed, and buried in it forever. Pliny could see them there. So can you, and so can I. The treasure of Arimaspea was gold; the treasure of Hyperborea was amber, golden as the sun. The Arimaspeans got their treasure by robbing the griffin-guarded gold from the ants who mined it: a great misfortune to the ants; but in the land of Hyperborea the ants were even more misfortunate: they were embedded in the gold of the amber itself. . . .

But even time must have a stop, it is said. Let me stop shortly after this quotation from one of the most fascinating books of my friend the late Willy Ley, *Dragons in Amber: Further Adventures of a Romantic Naturalist* (1951, Viking Press). One single line of this book contains, I think, the solution to the secret of Hyperborea; and it lay in my mind for years unmoving, like a fly in amber, so to speak. It lay revealed, yet it lay concealed. It is somewhat surprising that Willy Ley did not himself realize it, but let us remember he was not looking for it; he was not concerned with Hyperborea; he was concerned only with amber. And in mentioning the so-called inclusions, as they are called, the once-living things which happened to be on a tree or trunk or twig or even on the ground right underneath an amber pine at a moment it was exuding its sap: Sap which dropped upon and engulfed and surrounded and preserved it forever— Says Willy Ley: *"One set of inclusions proved that . . . in the amber forest . . . grew olive trees."* My long long search, sparked by these words, has disclosed that in the amber forests also grew the phoenix palm, whose leaves are found enclosed in amber; in the amber forest also grew the scarab beetle whose bodies are found preserved in amber; and in the amber forest also grew the scorpion whose bodies are found preserved in amber. . . .

And there we are, you see. There it *is*. Amber came from the land of the Hyperboreans. And in the land of the Hyperboreans, as anyone could plainly see, there had grown olive trees and palm trees, which grow only in climates warm to hot; and in the land of the Hyperboreans lived also the scarab and the scorpion, which live only in climates warm to hot. Amber came from the north, to be sure, but here was the proof: in the land of the Hyperboreans it was *warm:* the land of the Hyperboreans knew no winter, but flourished beneath the joyful protection of sunny-haired sun-god Apollo: Here was the amber. Here was the proof.

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And indeed it *was* proof.

The only trouble was that the conclusion drawn from the proof was accurately wrong. The proof was a million years old, or more; the proof dated from the time before the climate changed and before the land of Hyperborea sank beneath the shallow waters of what became the Baltic Sea, which brought forth year by year after the Spring storms whose waves stirred up the shallows those sunny pieces of amber long since fossilized and petrified and turned, almost, to stone: the proof was there, but the proof was a million or more years out of date. . . .

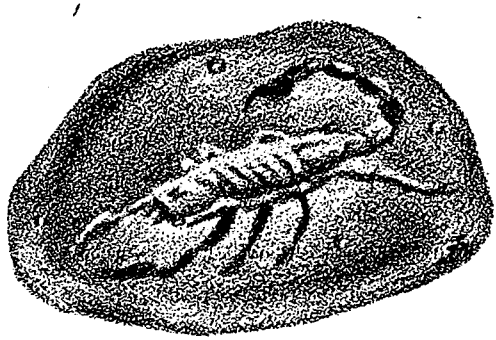
But that, after all, was not the fault of the Greeks.

—Gifts for Apollo! From sunny lands afar!
"There rolls the deep where grew the tree."

Notes

This reference in the Pindaric Odes to Hyperborea as being unvexed by Nemesis may puzzle us if we think of Nemesis only as an inexorable, avenging Fate—why should Hyperborea be an exception? The answer, I believe, lies in another and less-well-known aspect of Nemesis: she was also the deity of the inexorably changing seasons: Nemesis, so to speak, made them change. There was no getting around these inexorable alterations. The cold, and blight, and death, of Winter were due to Nemesis. Apollo went annually to visit Ethiopia. But Nemesis never went to visit Hyperborea, and, hence, in Hyperborea, there was no Winter.

Another, and a slightly odd (where all is odd) connection of the god and the place is to be found in this (I quote from Barry Holstun Lopez's Of Wolves and Men, *Scribners, N.Y. '78): "Apollo's mother, Leto, disguised as a wolf and accompanied by a pack of wolves, had made the trip from the land of the Hyperboreans to Delos [with Delphi, co-capital of Apollo-worship in ancient Greece] to escape detection by the jealous Hera, wife of Zeus, who was Apollo's father." Apollo, in other words, in visiting Hyperborea, was going back to have a family reunion—with Mom's folks. Glad t' see ya, Ap. How ya been? Leave me tune up this cythern here and we'll have a dance goin right soon now.*



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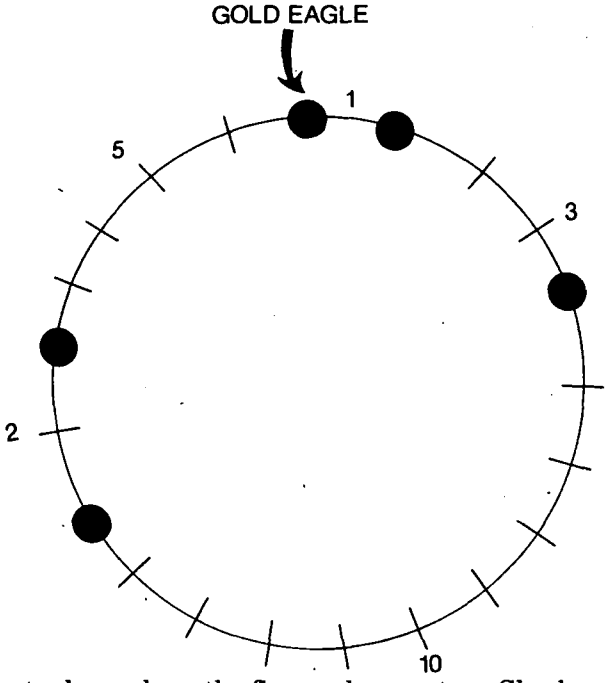
SOLUTION TO THE GONGS OF GANYMEDE (from page 39)



The spots show where the five eagles must go. Check and you will see that every number from 1 through 20 is represented once and once only by a distance on the circle between a pair of spots.

Let us generalize to n points (eagles). If $n = 1$ the pattern is trivial: a single point on a circle of length 1. If $n = 2$ the pattern is almost as trivial: a circle of length 3. When $n = 3$ the only pattern is a circle of length 7 with three points that have distances between them of 1, 2 and 4—the triple resonance lock! Every integer from 1 through 6 is given once only by a distance between two points.

For $n = 4$ there are two essentially different solutions. The circle's length is 13, and the spacings are either 1, 2, 6, 4 or 1, 3, 2, 7. We have already seen the only solution for $n = 5$. For $n = 6$ the circle is length 31 and the there are five solutions:

1,	2,	5,	4,	6,	13
1,	2,	7,	4,	12,	5

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1,	3,	2,	7,	8,	10
1,	3,	6,	2,	5,	14
1,	7,	3,	2,	4,	14

We can define a "Ganymede circle" as one on which n points can be placed so that the unit distances between pairs of points are the counting numbers from 1 through $n(n - 1)$. The circle's circumference will be $n(n - 1) + 1$. In 1938 James Singer, an American mathematician, proved that Ganymede circles exist for every n equal to a prime plus 1 or a power of a prime plus one; more formally, if $n = p^k + 1$, where p is a prime and k is any positive integer. It is not known if there are Ganymede circles that escape this proviso.

Singer conjectured that the number of different patterns (not counting reflections) for a Ganymede circle with more than two points is equal to Euler's phi function for the circumference, divided by $6k$. Euler's phi function for integer n is the number of integers not greater than n and relatively prime—that is, have no common divisors other than 1 and n—to n. For example, when $n = 6$ the circle's length is 31. Euler's phi function for 31 is 30. (The number 1 is always included among the relatively prime numbers. For any prime p, the phi function is always $p - 1$.) Writing 6 in the form $p^k + 1$ gives $5^1 + 1$, so $k = 1$. Our formula takes the values $30/6 = 5$, which tells us that for $n = 6$ there are five distinct solutions, not counting their reversals. David A. James, writing on "Magic Circles" in *Mathematics Magazine* (vol. 54, May 1981, pages 122-125; see also his letter on page 148 of the same issue), reports that he has proved the impossibility of a circle for $n = 7$, and that Singer's conjecture holds for all n less than 18.

On any Ganymede circle, *every* integral distance, however large, can be measured (and in only one way) if we permit as many circuits as we like around the circle in either direction. One day a devout Pythagorologist, after finishing his ceremonial walk, gazed up at the brilliant night sky. Jupiter was below the horizon, but Io was almost full, and he marveled at its random, disheveled surface of wavy dark lines—such a striking contrast to the rigid order of the counting numbers!

"I think I'll continue my walk," he said to himself, "by taking every sixth dome, then every seventh, and so on, until I strike a gong exactly 100 times."

Can you determine how many circuits he will have made (including the eleven circuits of his ceremonial walk) before he strikes 100? The answer is on page 87.

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THE SANTA CLONE INTERVIEW

by Valdis Augstkalns

art: Artifact

The author is a research associate with the Engineering Plastic Materials Division of Du Pont, lives in West Virginia, and travels a lot. During the ragweed season, antihistamines make him no good for anything but economic forecasts and fiction. He suspects that he is probably the youngest guy to write for the magazine to take part in World War II action, having been shot at by virtually all sides except the Japanese, back then.

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The recent, sensational disclosures which at last satisfactorily explain many a perplexed, modern child's question: "Mommy, how can Santa be at both ends of the mall at the same time?" have caused Santa Claus to avoid the press. He has been in total seclusion since Christmas. Requests for interviews have garnered only a surly, "No comment!" from his chief legal elf.

Our reporter tracked Claus to his secluded North Pole villa and got the first followup to the spectacular Christmas Eve TV appearance.

"Claus looked haggard and worn," notes our correspondent. "Not at all like the jolly jelly belly portrayed by his PR flacks. He warmed up a bit when I suggested that he hire Jerry Rafshoon to refurbish his image ('Are you sure I shouldn't get Reagan's guy?') but during most of the interview he spoke factually, without much animation.

"The interview was conducted in a spacious, tastefully decorated living room warmed by a large fireplace. Outside the triple glazed picture windows, we could see an occasional polar bear gamboling on the ice floes.

"After a bit of irrelevant social chitchat, I led off with a sympathetic query."

R(eporter): I saw you with Mike Wallace on "60 Minutes."
C(laus): (shudders)
R: It reminded me a bit of the bad old Wallace of twenty years ago. Right for the jugular. Was it as bad for you as it looked?
C: Worse. The man is a fiend. And the bastard that edited the tape . . . [About thirty seconds of irrelevant material has been deleted here on advice of our legal department.]
R: I thought that having little Virginia sing

Here comes Santa
Here comes Santa
Here comes Santa Clone

was a bit much. And the rest of it was so superficial.
C: You sound like you think I got off easy. Listen. I agreed to talk to you because you looked so damn cold out there and because you promised to give my side of it fair exposure. . . .
R: Sorry. I did not mean to upset you or belittle your travail. What I was trying to get at was that I thought the TV show went in for a lot of cheap sensationalism at the expense of getting to the roots of the real story. Just for starters, how did you ever get involved in all this? What started it?
C: Real estate and retailing trends. I first saw trouble coming about

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25 years ago. Do you realize how many new shopping centers have been built in the last 25 years?

Lots and lots. Each with a branch of a department store at one end, a national retailer at the other, and the main local store in the middle. Then there are all the photo kiosks where the kiddies can have their picture taken with Santa.

I was spread thin 20 years ago. Then they began to set up Christmas displays right after Labor Day, which is when I like to go to the beach. There was no way I was going to be able to keep up.

R: So you went for the technological solution?

C: You bet. This is a technological age, sonny. I looked at computers and the Disneyland robots, but even their Abe Lincoln was cold. So one of the elves, an Asimov fan, suggested I talk to the biochemists. The accountant elf said to try the bureaucrats. I took the advice of both.

R: Wallace claimed that you had 4000 Santa Clones grown.

C: That's almost right. There are 4004 official Santa Clones.

R: And this is the first place the telly boys blew the followup. Sturgeon's Revelation teaches that 90% of everything is crud. How did you dispose of the bodies of the 36,000 Santa Clone rejects?

C: I can see why you think Mike did not dig. You maybe think I should dye this poor white beard blue?

R: Not necessarily. But you are not going to tell me that there were no developmental failures.

C: (Looks out the front window at an ice floe with a case of CC on it floating by.) God, but I could do with a belt of that. Oh, well. I suppose there is no harm in opening up with the statistics a bit.

We did not have to kill any of them, but you are correct that only about 10% were acceptable to me. The rest . . .

R: Let me guess. I saw an item on the wire a few weeks back, just before Christmas. Four Hari-Krishna Santas arrested in Columbus, Ohio for mugging a passer-by who failed to fork over.

C: Right on the button, sonny. Freaky theology and lack of warmth were common failure modes. What would you expect for someone brought up in a test tube, so to speak? Fortunately, the oriental sects were glad to take those off our hands. Dr. Land took a bunch to make Polavision® salesmen of them; but most of the leftovers went to the Teamsters, which makes sense if you think about it a bit.

R: 40,000 clones is big money any way you look at it. With intensive-

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care beds in hospitals going at over a thousand bucks a day, I make it out to be at least 15 billion dollars a year. Who paid for it?

C: Medicare. I'm over 65. I got a little bit more back by claiming them as dependents, but the IRS is so hard to deal with it almost was not worth the effort.

R: For twenty years! No wonder Social Security is going broke and the budget has been unbalanced since Ike's days.

C: Not really twenty years. The last ten mostly. But during the '70s this project was the biggest single cause of federal budget deficits. Vietnam, Nixon, Ford, even Mr. Jimminy, they all got a bad rap. Actually, Joe Califano was the only one who knew it all from the start. And you may remember what happened to him when the Goober finally caught on to what was going on.

R: I am surprised Senator Proxmire has not jumped you.

C: He owes me. I recommended his hair transplant guy.

R: You mean that white beard is . . . is . . .

C: You don't want to know.

R: . . . but . . . You said you were tapering off now.

C: Right. There's enough of me to go around for quite some time to come. The baby boom is over. The craziest part of this whole business is that we are going to have to patent me as a composition of matter and also take out a bunch of process patents on copying techniques.

R: *Patent* Santa Claus?

C: I don't have any choice. It's simple self protection. Look, if the government takes out the patents, they get a stranglehold on Christmas. I doubt that you would be too happy about that.

R: There must be a bright side to all this gloom and doom.

C: There is. Think. What is the stock market going to do when they finally realize that the federal budget is really back in control?

R: You know, that's right. And just in case my broker forgets to do so in his Christmas letter to you this year, thanks a lot.

C: Don't mention it. It's doing me a world of good just to get some of this stuff off my chest.

Hey! Let's put on some mukluks and see if we can chase down that ice floe that went by the window a couple of minutes ago. Before it gets too far. We can talk more later.

[The quest apparently succeeded because our reporter's notes become increasingly unintelligible beyond this point of the conversation. The corresponding tapes consist mostly of limericks, each one dirtier than the one before.

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[Our reporter returned to the office in an extremely disheveled condition, but being a dedicated man immediately began to transcribe his research material. About half way through, he became ill and had to be rushed to the hospital. Afterwards, we found in his desk—along with the notes and tapes—several Polaroid® glossies of Santa Claus wrestling with three different polar bears, and an enigmatic one of Claus, several elves, our reporter, and a *felis navidad*—a nativity cat—in improbable configuration.

[The doctors at General Hospital have studied the tooth marks and exonerate Santa, the bears, and the feline. Our reporter appears to have been bitten by a rabid elf, but thanks to hypothermal therapy and computerized, intensive-care support systems, he is expected to pull through. "He's a very lucky young man," said one of the doctors. "This is a brand new system, a spinoff from some hush-hush government project." We nodded sagely.

[The recovery and release is expected to be in about four months. At that time we look forward to filling in some of the obvious deficiencies in the interview as completed to date and published here in the public interest.

[For example, we are curious about Santa Claus's views on the morality of loosing some 40,000 near-immortals upon the face of the Earth. The editors hope, for their peace of mind and for good will on Earth, that immortality is a double-recessive trait. We could use the breathing space. Beyond that, all we can hope for is good luck.

[Then there are the political possibilities and instabilities of Clone Lib, an obvious uptime complication.

[Our reporter's expense account for this assignment, completed just before he collapsed, will appear in our next issue as the lead fiction item.]

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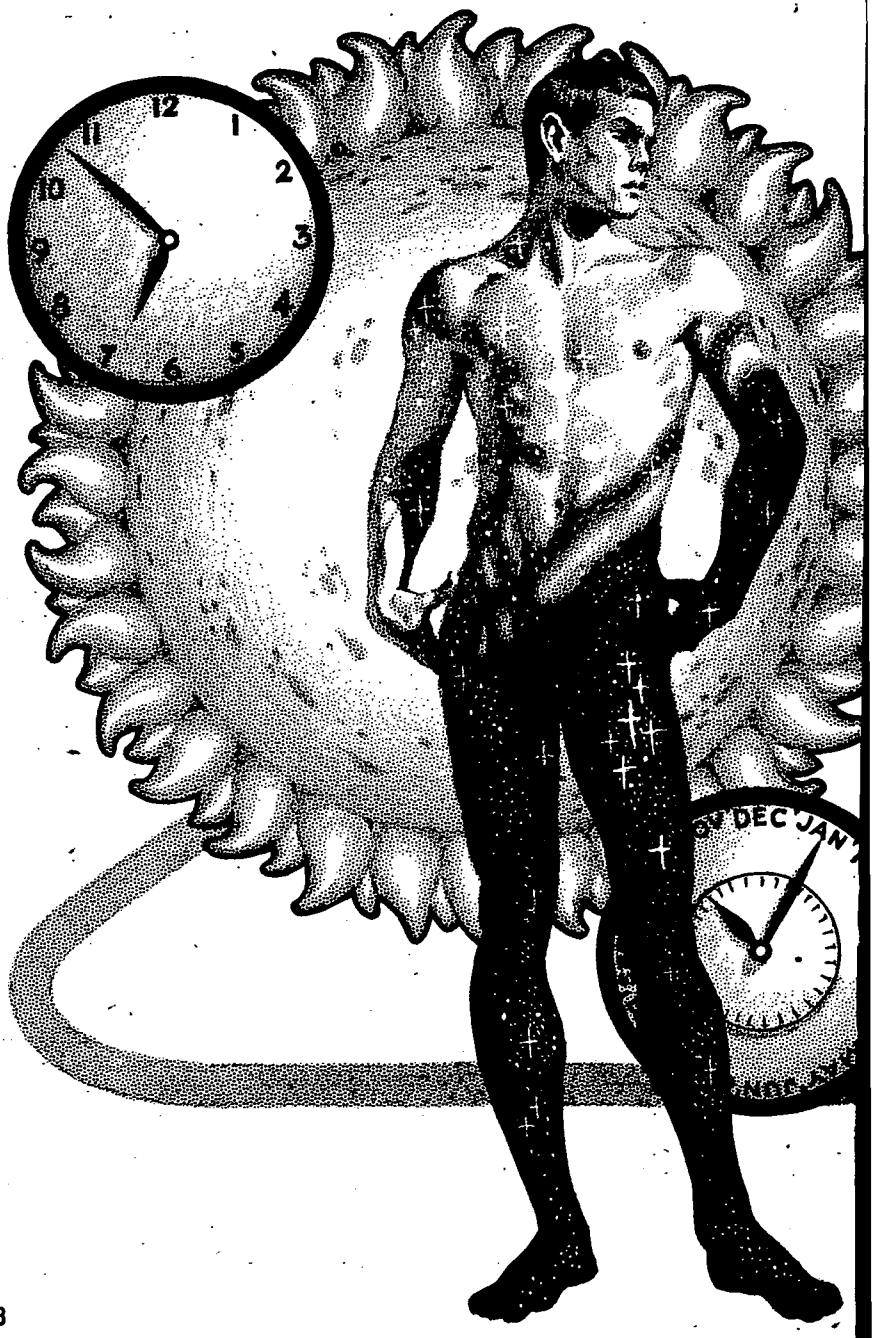

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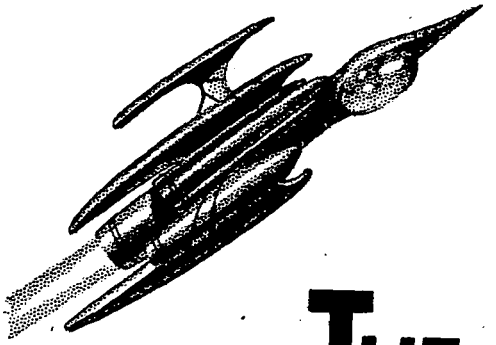

THE JARABON

by Lee Killough

art: George Barr

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Mrs. Killough was born in Syracuse (in 1942), grew up in Atchison, and now lives in Manhattan—all in the state of Kansas. She gave up on horses after two broken legs and a concussion; between her work as a Radiologic Technologist at the Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and her writing (Deadly Silents *and* Pitcairn's Planet, *both from del Rey), she's more than busy.*

The things I do for Sperrow, Kele thought with a sigh. She had considered wearing stars for the occasion, something appropriate for interstellar travel, but in the end, could not resist a web instead. Spangled with tiny syngems, the painted pattern radiated outward across her face from the sooty, lurking spiders of her eyes. *Come into my parlor, little fly,* she thought toward the man walking before her down the concourse of Chelsea Station to the berth of the Cunard galley *Marchlight.*

He blended well with the other passengers . . . boots just as high on his thighs, sleeves as sweeping, the fabric of his clothing as tasseled, fringed, and glittered, topped by an elaborate embroidered and jeweled yoke. Riffers—thieves—looking for a tag, though, would instantly recognize the cheap ostentation for what it was—from all of seven meters away Kele had no trouble appraising the "jewels" on the yoke as inexpensive synthetics—and pass him over in favor of the woman ahead of him, say, whose face gems and clothing reflected genuine wealth. The man walked to avoid attention, too . . . not boldly, yet not timidly enough to mark him as an easy victim. No one without Kele's special knowledge of him would suspect him of carrying anything of real value. Which made him an ideal courier for Sidakar Vermilion.

But not a perfect one, Kele hoped.

"He's carrying a package. I want you to secure it for me before he can turn it over to Vermilion on Northfire," Belas Sperrow had said when his call jerked Kele out of a sound sleep just a few hours before.

"Thanks for giving me so much time to plan," she had grumbled.

"I didn't know about the delivery until a short time ago." Sperrow was not a large or imposing man—small, in fact—but a lean whip of a man, a knife blade of a man, with eyes brilliant and hard as blue diamonds. From the screen of the phone, the eyes shot icy glints

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at her above a persuasive smile. "Kele, my little sparrow, you can do it. I keep telling you, you're the best thief in the Hundred Worlds."

As she followed Vermilion's courier, Kele reflected wryly that Sperrow seemed to enjoy finding increasingly more difficult assignments to make her prove it, though. She wondered why she accepted some of them, then answered herself. For the fun, partially. What other job offered the same challenge and excitement in performance, the same exultation in success? And she owed Sperrow. She owed him gratitude and loyalty and service. She owed Sperrow everything.

Eighteen years ago she had been one of the hundreds of nameless, homeless children living in the streets of Windward's ironically named Newhope City, stealing for a living and sleeping wherever she could. The sailcar had looked so enticing with its expensive gleam and the bar in the passenger compartment open so she could see its glass and silver accessories. Only, as she worked at matching the tone of her whistle to the lock frequencies of the door, a hand closed on her neck.

She had turned biting and clawing on her captor, but even her speed and desperation were no match for his strength, and he threw her, bruised, at the feet of his smaller companion . . . Sperrow.

"What were you doing?" Sperrow demanded.

She had looked up, her sooty eyes meeting the hard glitter of his. "Nothing," she replied sullenly.

The taller man jerked her to her feet. Her teeth cracked together as he shook her like a snakehound killing an angelmaker, then dropped her again.

"What were you doing?" Sperrow repeated.

This time she whispered in terror, "Whistling open the car."

The taller man laughed in derision. "What? Ridiculous! Bel, I'll call a badge."

But Sperrow had shaken his head and with eyes narrowed, squatted down in front of Kele. "You can really do that?"

She eyed him, uncertain what to make of his suddenly friendly tone.

"That's the best quadtone on the market, supposedly untamperable. If you can whistle it open," he said, "I'll *give* you everything you were going to steal."

Licking her lips at the thought of the car's contents, she had whistled open the lock.

"How old are you?" Sperrow asked.

"Ten."

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He raised a brow. "I'd have thought six or seven. Do you have a home?"

She eyed him. What was this? "No. Are you going to give me what you promised?"

Sperrow had smiled thinly. "That and more, if you'll work for me."

He had made her his ward, had housed, fed, clothed, and educated her, sparing no expense. She moved in the most elite of circles, living and looking like the rich bitch playgirl Sperrow wanted people believing her to be. When all Sperrow asked in return was a little theft and espionage, how could she reasonably refuse him?

Kele never had and did not this time, either. Staring back at his image on the screen, she shrugged. "Well, there's nothing like the challenge of a riff on the fly. What's the package?"

"Do you know what a jarabon is?"

Kele knew. The Copians—the extinct, original inhabitants of Cornucopia—had carved gems into replicas of flowers so realistic they looked like petrified blossoms. Each diffracted light in such a way as to glow internally. Achingly beautiful, they were very old; very rare; and very, very valuable. Few existed outside of museums.

"So having learned that Vermilion is about to put his greedy paws on one, you've developed an uncontrollable desire to possess it instead?"

"Oh, no." Sperrow had smiled, a thin gesture with little amusement. "I want it in order to give it back."

She stared at him. "To give it *back?*" Industrial espionage she understood, but these other games Sperrow and his competitor peers played grew complex beyond all comprehension. She sighed. The things she did for him. "As you wish."

Easy enough to say, Kele reflected, watching her quarry approach the boarding hatch, but that had been before she realized she would not locate the courier until he reached Chelsea Station. Observing him up in the lounge area, she had not been able to guess where he might be carrying the jarabon. That meant she would have to search him and his luggage, and she knew only one place offering time enough for that . . . the flight to Northfire.

The time, but . . . was she physically capable of making use of the opportunity? Would the timewind let her? She hoped Sperrow appreciated what she was about to put herself through on his behalf. Taking a deep breath, she held out her embarkation pass to the boarding steward.

He examined and returned it with the smile of deference ship stewards gave someone of her apparent wealth. "Nidra Saar. Wel-

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come aboard. You'll be in bunk 43-C."

This close to the courier, Kele needed cover. She found it by putting herself on the other side of a matron with painstakingly pampered skin and jeweled butterflies around her eyes. "I think it's unfair that we have to spend the entire voyage in dreamtime," she told the butterfly woman in a petulant tone. "Why should only pilots be able to see the stars in hyperlight?"

The butterflies around the matron's eyes fluttered. "But, my dear, it's the only way one *can* travel in hyperlight. Everyone knows that."

Dreaming was the only way most people could, anyway, an unfortunate fact which had been thrust upon humanity in the testing of Emile Gallipeau's new FTL drive. Two of the three crewmen on the Gallipeau-ship's first field trial came back with severe psychological disturbances that affected them the remainder of their lives, and subsequent tests had shown complete sedation to be the only effective preventative measure. It established the pattern for all future interstellar travel.

"I have a friend who once tried to ride the timewind," the butterfly woman said, "and though she took her dream dust just minutes after the ship went hyperlight, she nearly lost her mind. She had nightmares about it for years."

Kele bit her lip. This was just what she needed to hear.

She glanced around the hatch, corridors, and passenger cabin as she followed her companion in, searching for security devices. She did not like what she saw: no spy eyes anywhere but at the hatch, none in the corridors or cabin.

"How does the pilot monitor us?" she asked a steward in feigned anxiety.

"With telltales built into the bunks, miss," the steward replied. He gave her a reassuring smile. "Don't worry; he'll know immediately if you slip too deep or start to wake prematurely, and he'll correct you with the proper drugs. He's trained and licensed to administer dream dust and its antagonists."

Kele smiled back. Inside, she frowned uneasily. No viewscreen monitoring. Bad news. The absence of such security devices in a galley whose owning company had been shipping passengers and cargo between stars for five hundred years could only mean they felt no need for them. The first thief successfully riffing passengers in-flight would have caused the installation of enough safeguards to prevent a re-occurrence. Was the so-called timewind, the effect produced in hyperlight by forward motion in space and treading in place in time, *that* debilitating to the normal human body and mind? Kele

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wished there were another way to take the jarabon.

She had no choice but to try for it here, though; there would be no other chance before the courier delivered his package to Vermilion. If it had been anyone but Sperrow asking her to do this, or if it had not offered such a challenge—stealing where no one had dared to before—she would have refused to do it.

Another steward greeted the butterfly woman and handed her a blue capsule and a small glass of wine. The butterfly woman promptly swallowed one with the aid of the other, then let herself be assisted up into her bunk.

The steward fastened the safety net over her and turned to Kele. "Some wine with your dreamdust, miss?"

Kele accepted the wine but waved the capsule away. "I don't intend to sleep this time."

The butterfly woman turned her head drowsily. "But you *must,* my dear. I told you what happened to my friend."

The steward, however, smiled. With the air of one who had dealt with the situation many times before, he said, "You won't enjoy being wide-eyed. Believe me, hyperlight is intolerable."

"Pilots don't find it so," she said stubbornly . . . and smiled to herself, enjoying her own performance.

"A pilot is a unique individual. Only one person in five hundred thousand is hyperlight Tolerant."

Around her, other passengers frowned, waiting with impatience for the steward's help. Kele tried not to look at Vermilion's courier. Most agents in her and the courier's position tried to avoid attracting attention. However, her web design hid the features of her face, even if he had been told about her by Vermilion, and an elaborate dark wig covered her natural moon-pale hair . . . and she hoped that the very act of calling attention to herself, in fact, would disarm him about her.

She tossed her head, hamming hauteur. "I'm a unique person, too . . . one in a *million,* I'm told." With satisfaction, she heard the impatient sighs around her and bit back a grin. She folded her arms. "You can't *make* me take the dream dust."

The steward's patient smile fixed in place. "Of course not, and I wouldn't dream of forcing you, miss, but . . . the ship isn't really designed for conscious passengers. Those four chairs at the front are all we have for a lounge and the only food provided is for the pilot."

"I'll fast. It's good for the spirit, anyway."

Behind her, a man whose face had been painted with seams and rivet heads to mimic metal plates snapped, "Take your capsule and

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stop delaying take-off."

"I have a suggestion," the steward said mildly. "Keep your capsule. Then if you change your mind, you can still sleep. The pilot can assist you into your bunk."

She heard *when* beneath *if.*

Kele conceded. "Very well." Her character should not be *too* unreasonable. Besides, if she could not tolerate the timewind, Kele very much wanted the option of dreamtime. She held out a hand for the capsule, then tucking it into a sleeve pocket, sat down in one of the deep chairs at the front.

She hoped no one else felt the urge to ride the timewind this trip.

Near her chair, a screen gave the illusion of looking out into space, past the station and down toward the misty blue-and-brown of Chelsea below. Staring at the image, Kele tried to remember everything she had heard about hyperlight and the timewind, particularly accounts by people who rode it successfully; but all she recalled were the nightmare stories of failure. No pilots ever seemed to publish articles about themselves; but then, pilots had little in common with ordinary people. They did not even communicate. Two she had seen in Chelsea Station shot unseeing by her, hyperkinetic, quicksilver, babbling to each other in rapid sentences that dominoed against each other and jumped subjects in midthought.

The stewards fastened the last of the safety nets—everyone else obediently took their dream dust—then with a glance at Kele and a shake of their heads, left the passenger cabin. Minutes later she felt a vibration through the ship as the outer hatch closed after them. The image of the station on the screen fell away in wheeling stars.

Kele gripped the arms of her chair nervously. Any minute now the galley would begin its dive into the gravity well of Chelsea's sun. Swinging around the sun with the momentum the dive gave them, they would shoot away slingshot style toward Northfire, and Gallipeau's drive would activate, boosting the galley into hyperlight. Then—then Kele would learn personally if the timewind had earned its killer reputation.

The bronze sun filled the screen, hurtling at her. She swallowed. She had been told that galleys came very close to the sun, but . . . *this* close? Sweat beaded her forehead and upper lip and trickled down from her underarms. She saw nothing but blinding light and boiling flame. Sunspots like immense dark cauldrons looked close enough to reach out and touch.

The play of bright and brighter light blurred by ever faster. Sud-

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denly it disappeared, replaced by fire-spangled blackness. That changed, too, even as she watched, the stars stretching from points to ovals to a rainbow of streamers, blue ahead and red at the edge of the screen. Then the red streamers vanished, leaving the blue streaks dissolving into black nothingness . . . and, howling, the timewind struck.

Her mind called it by the scientific term, contra-chronic pressure, but she experienced it as a wind. It sounded like wind, a low roar in her ears, a symphony of the slowed sounds of her heart and lungs and the ship around her; and it felt like wind, pushing, buffeting her, pressing her hard into the chair so that movement came as though through cold-thickened syrup. Worse, it battered at her mind, too, pushing back her very thoughts. Thinking became like pulling against heavy gravity, or pushing a great burden uphill on a frictionless surface. Her mind strained, fighting, but formed a thought only with agonizing slowness. On some deep, subconscious level, where she did not have to think, Kele counted time—seconds, minutes, hours—and sensed with horrified astonishment the span needed to frame an idea in the face of the timewind.

Two days of this? she thought with dismay.

Perceived by the ship and the rest of the galaxy, it would be just two days—two days longer than she cared to spend like this—and in that time, she might manage to drag herself through two days of motion and possibly think a day's worth of thoughts, but somewhere deep in her, a clock would count the actual time spent treading in place against the timewind, every endless moment of the months and years.

She fought to keep from reaching for the blue capsule. How could she withstand this even long enough to search the courier? Her mind felt as though it were being shredded. Could she manage to work at all? How did pilots tolerate this hell? There must be some trick to it. Granted that some people thought and reacted faster than others, but she had always considered herself to be among those faster individuals, and here she sat virtually helpless.

Kele locked her hands on the arms of her chair and, with her deep clock counting the hours, forced herself into a standing position. However the pilots did it, she could not. She would have to do the best she could this way. She did not try to think that thought; she simply understood it.

She had noted the location of the bunk where the courier slept. Fighting the pressure against body and mind, she dragged herself down the row of bunks toward him. The timewind howled and

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boomed in her ears, reverberating through teeth and bones in maddening bass frequencies. The wine in her stomach churned threateningly.

Fumbling at the catches of the safety net, Kele discovered with dismay that opening them required three steps which must be thought through before executing them in the proper sequence. Even struggling to think and act when the mental phrases felt as though they were unraveling faster than she formulated them, her spirits rose. A catch of this complexity must mean that at least one successful or near-successful riffer had preceded her.

The catches yielded after intense concentration, and with time ticking off—*hurry, Kele, hurry; you're taking weeks*—she drove her sluggish body into an exhaustive search of the sleeping man. Normally, her blood would have been racing with heady excitement, lifting her to a peak of mental performance, tuning her body into an instrument of lightning-fast precision. This time, however, her blood eddied turgidly. She could hardly move, let alone think.

Painfully, she joined one thought to another. It was like building a feather mosaic in a gale. If she were the courier, she would have hidden the jarabon with care, not taking chances with losing it even during the supposed security of the flight. But trying to guess what he might consider a good hiding place exhausted her. She worked through his clothing, rolling him onto his side to check the material down his back. His pockets held a variety of objects, but none of them the jarabon or any container which might conceivably hide the jewel.

Faster, Kele.

Why had she let Sperrow talk her into this? She ought to give it up, quit. Right now she wanted to quit the whole business and find another job. But even as the thought fought to form, she let it dissolve. She had grown accustomed to her lifestyle. She feared losing it, or perhaps it was that she feared that giving it up would return her to the desperate street life which still haunted her dreams. And she owed what she had to Sperrow.

She tried to think: was the jarabon small enough to be swallowed? She hoped he had not chosen that most secure cache of all; slitting him open to check was not her style.

The cabin door hissed, sliding open.

Kele could not have moved faster if she had teleported. She slammed the safety net closed and leaped away from the bunk. By the time the door finished opening, she stood with heart galloping, clinging to the rail of a bunk two sections beyond the stack where

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the courier slept.

Astonished, she began asking herself how in the Hundred Worlds she had managed—

But the thought dissolved unfinished as she blinked at the galactic display sweeping into the cabin. A naked man wore it—the pilot, surely—a brilliant display of gold, silver, and syngems, glittering in nebulas and constellations and clusters . . . the universe painted and glued to skin the color of burnished copper. He moved on feet shod in whisper-soft deck slippers.

"Raven Windust, pilot." He spoke abruptly, but smiled. "Tuck you in?"

Suns, she wished she could let him. Kele felt exhausted enough to sleep for two days without any help at all from drugs. But she lifted her chin as the spoiled, stubborn Nidra Saar *persona,* unwilling to admit a poor choice, would do. "No. I'm enjoying myself watching the stars and listening to the timewind."

She caught her breath in a self-conscious laugh. The drag of the timewind had lowered her voice to a deep, husky drawl that drew the words out interminably.

If he found the voice a ludicrous contrast to her petite stature, Windust did not show it. The pilot came across the cabin to take her arm. "Come."

She hung back. "Come where?"

"Control room. A better view of the stars there."

"Oh, I'm fine here." *Go away, pilot. I've no time to socialize!*

"More comfortable, too, and food; I'll share mine."

"I'm not hungry."

His eyes widened. "You don't want to come? I don't usually ask wide-eyes forward."

A woman like Nidra would be flattered at the invitation. Kele went with him, wondering how to leave. Perhaps if she annoyed him, he would banish her back to the passenger cabin.

She launched into a hopefully boring monologue, gushing on the "romance" of riding the timewind, on the display presented by the stars turned to blue streamers— ". . . like the fireworks at the Winterfest on Frost, don't you think?" —and on the growl of the timewind— "With imagination, you can turn the undertones into music. It's so exotic. I can hardly wait to reach Northfire and tell my friends all about it."

Curiously, she felt that she could be speaking at almost normal speed if she wanted, but she let her voice continue dragging. She read impatience in the angles of Windust's head and shoulders, but

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instead of asking her to return to the cabin, he merely stopped listening to her. Once in the control room with its screens and instruments, and doorway connecting it to the pilot's quarters, he busied himself checking the controls.

Kele fell silent. She lowered herself into the enveloping softness of a chair in his quarters and through the open door watched the glittering stars on his buttocks. Presently, she called to him, "Do you *really* like this?"

He looked around. "I love it; it's life; docking's dying and port's just waiting."

"But how can you—"

But he had turned away again. She continued the thought silently while her inner clock measured the real-time hours necessary to think it: how could he love the ceaseless pressure and sound? Of course, he managed to move and apparently think with normality despite it. If only she could, too. Then maybe she could finish what she needed to do before the *Marchlight* docked at Northfire Station.

She had moved normally, too, but only for a moment, when he nearly caught her in the cabin. She could have talked at normal speed, as well. What made the difference?

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Mind, she decided after reflection. She had not thought while talking, just run on, and her actions in the cabin had come as reflex reaction. Thinking appeared to be the bottleneck. Disengage the mind, and the animal body proceeded at due speed. Now, she thought sardonically, if she could only avoid thinking.

A moment later she pressed her fingers to her temples, swearing silently at Sidakar Vermilion, Emile Gallipeau, the courier, and even Belas Sperrow. She had to find a way back to the cabin . . . had to find the jarabon before she went mad. Lord, how she wanted that capsule in her sleeve pocket. Soon, she promised her aching body and mind; she would take it as soon as she had the jarabon.

Windust came into his quarters and rummaged through a cabinet and refrigerator. He eyed her with what Kele read as a puzzled expression. "Something to eat?"

She swallowed. "No, thank you." Her stomach was rebelling enough at the wine she had drunk. The thought of spending subconsciously perceived hours or days throwing up food only added to her nausea. "I couldn't."

He smiled in sympathy. "I understand. Sleep, then?"

She straightened. "I told you, this is the most exciting experience of my life. I don't want to miss a minute of it."

"Seeing the stars in hyperlight?"

"Yes."

"Listening to the timewind?"

Some note in his voice sent a ripple of wariness through her. What was he doing? "That, too."

His eyes fixed steadily on her. "Disturbing the passenger in 38-D?"

Every cell of her went still, watching him . . . waiting. She felt like the small wild creature she had once seen at night on the lawns of Sperrow's country estate, frozen in the light of her hand lamp. Had its heart slammed against its ribs as hers did now?

His constellations shot off icy glints of light. "Telltales told me he was moving without vital signs going up to indicate consciousness, meaning someone moving him . . . you: why?"

In over ten years of industrial espionage for Sperrow she had never been caught before. She *would* have to be caught now . . . now when any attempt to plan what to say blew away in the hellish hurricane of the timewind.

Then, looking up at Windust, she saw his expression . . . not grim, not accusatory. Rather, he regarded her with that previous puzzlement. He did not suspect her of theft, she realized in a flash of

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understanding; he expected, or perhaps even hoped, for some reasonable explanation. Her outward appearance still protected her!

She gave up trying to think and let her reflexes take over. "I was trying to recover something he stole from my father."

He raised a brow but said nothing.

Did he believe her? "We've had a Cornucopian jarabon in our family for generations. Last night my father gave me permission to wear it out. I met a man and went home with him. When I woke up, he and the jarabon had vanished. I found out, though, that he works for a man named Sidakar Vermilion, who is one of my father's business rivals. I think he stole the jarabon at Vermilion's request and is taking it to him. I have to get it back before my father finds out what happened."

As she talked, she watched Windust. The expression on his face told her he believed her; but instead of feeling satisfaction, she regretted the necessity of the lie . . . and wondered at her reaction.

"Why not report it?" Windust asked.

"Report it? You mean to law enforcement people?" She did not have to pretend surprise; it colored her voice naturally. "We don't report such incidents. It isn't really a theft; men like Vermilion and my father play games with each other. Vermilion probably intends to give the jarabon back."

Windust stared at her. "Then why worry about it?"

"Because—" She sighed. What was it about him that made her want to be truthful and make him understand? "In the game, if Vermilion takes possession of the jarabon, even if he returns it my father loses face." He seemed familiar somehow, she decided, struggling with the thought, as though they had known each other for years. How strange. "I can't let him lose face, can I? Not my father."

Windust's constellations shimmered as he shook his head in bewilderment. "He doesn't have to; Security on Northfire Station can search and recover the jarabon before it reaches this Vermilion."

"But that's an *official* agency," Kele protested. "That's cheating." Very true, but even if not, she dared not put herself in official hands. Any inquiries into her background would almost certainly prove embarrassing, if not dangerous to her liberty. "If I recover the jarabon myself, *Vermilion* loses face. Please, come with me to the cabin and watch me search the man. You can make certain I take only the jarabon."

But now Windust eyed her doubtfully. "I've only your word it's yours; Security'll investigate."

Cold trailed down her spine. "Is this a kind of arrest, then?"

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He shrugged in a splintering play of light off painted stars. "You can be a guest here the rest of the run or I can shoot you with dream dust."

She bit her lip in chagrin. After all the successful operations she had run for Sperrow, avoiding traps laid by professionals, here she fell prey to a naked pilot. Compounding her humiliation was his willingness to leave her conscious and loose despite his suspicions of her, reflecting his judgment of how helpless the timewind had rendered her. That bastard timewind!

Rubbing her temples, she touched the syngems on her face and remembered the design painted there. Her hands came down again, hope rising. *Patience, Kele. Play the spider. Surrender and wait for a chance at the courier.*

She looked up at Windust. "Consider me your guest."

Windust returned to the control room. To distract herself from the relentless march of the chronometer and the thought of being given to Security, she pushed up out of the chair and leaned against the doorway watching the pilot work. After a bit, that became a pleasant entertainment worthy of being enjoyed for its own sake. He had the sturdy muscular development of a gymnast, a result of constantly riding the timewind? and moved with the gliding grace of a dancer that set his painted and glued starfields glittering. The familiarity of him struck her more strongly than ever.

"Why are you a pilot?" she asked. "Isn't it lonely?"

"Solitary," he replied. A black nebula glinted across one rippling shoulder. "A significant difference. I like solitude."

That was why he seemed familiar; he reminded her of Sperrow, and of herself. All of them liked solitude, and Windust carried the same aura of self-containment Sperrow did and which she felt around herself, as though they lived in closed systems needing virtually nothing from the outside.

"That's what you enjoy about hyperlight?"

He turned in spattering rainbows of light. "The timewind sings all songs for those who listen . . . supports . . . insulates. Without it there's just void and endless falling."

She pictured the two pilots she had seen in Chelsea Station, moving and talking like quicksilver. Another image followed, her in their place, feeling the absence of the accustomed pressure, not a relief but a vacuum through which body and thoughts hurtled headlong, uncontrolled. She shivered. "Is that why you call docking a death?"

Stars twinkled. He stared at her in surprise. "You understand?"

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She felt surprise in herself, too, but not at her understanding. Belatedly, she realized that the last thoughts had come quickly, as thoughts should, without effort. She reached back for them, trying to determine how they had been different from previous thoughts. Images . . . that was it; they had been pictures and not words. Was that Windust's trick?

Excitedly, she asked, "Do you think in pictures instead of words?"

A glow flared in his eyes. He nodded. "Yes. Images and concepts. Faster than words. You *do* understand." He paused. "Do *you* think images or words?"

She heard excitement in his voice and wondered at it. Why him? "Both, but words, mostly."

The glow in his eyes flared to incandescent brilliance. "Forget words; concentrate on only pictures."

She blinked at him. "What?"

Light shattered from him as he whirled across the control room to take both her hands. "Images," he said in an intense voice. "Make your mind a vid screen and see the action but just *feel* the sound. Train yourself."

The timewind tore at her mind, shredding the thoughts as she tried to comprehend what he wanted from her. "Why—"

He interrupted. "One in half a million is Tolerant; fewer can withstand the solitude. There's never enough pilots. We need."

Her breath caught as she understood his emotion. He saw her as someone like himself, as new kin. He wanted to recruit her. Excitement rose in her. In a dazzling vision, she saw herself at the helm of a galley, stars streaming from blue to nothingness around her, the timewind singing. "Do you really think I could be a pilot?"

"Let's see; think pictures."

Between instrument checks he worked with her. The trick of thinking images and concepts came hard at first, but once she began, it grew easier. Like a stream cutting a bed, her mind flowed into the path of least resistance, into the fastest, least painful method of thinking.

Windust grinned in approval. "A Tolerant, and functional. Congratulations."

Grabbing her hands, he pulled her into his arms and danced her around the control room. Kele followed in triumph. With the function time of her mind reduced, she could move as quickly as she desired. The buffeting weight of the timewind vanished. Moving to the rhythm of the timewind, they danced across it as lightly as thistledown on a summer breeze. Images played in Kele's mind, shivering

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a little in the gale tearing at them, but each holding undissolved until replaced by the next. She soared on a delirious wave of exultation.

"This isn't hard at all," she said in delight. "Why can't everyone do it?"

Windust shrugged. "Don't know; maybe a combination of reasons, beginning with not being willing to stay wide-eyed long enough to learn. But you've learned." And he kissed her.

Kele became suddenly aware of the warmth of his bare skin beneath her hands and through the fabric of her dress. She hesitated only a moment before kissing him back. After all, she reflected, neither of them were *completely* self-contained. They needed to reach out of their preferred solitude once in a while.

She discovered an interesting aspect to making love in hyperlight. Counting time on a subconscious level, the peaks of emotion and sensation lasted for days at a time.

Afterward, Windust dozed but Kele could not. Her mind raced, building images: Kele Sperrow at the helm of a galley feeling as much excitement and satisfaction as a riff had ever brought her . . . Kele, once nameless, once homeless, a gutter brat from Windward but now joining the company of a rare, priceless few . . . human jarabons.

But there the images froze and dissolved. Jarabon. She sighed and rolled away from Windust's warmth. How foolish she was, letting herself be carried away by the pilot's vision of what she was. Maybe she had the ability to be a pilot, but she was not free to do as she wanted; she owed too much to Sperrow. And Sperrow wanted her to bring him the jarabon.

She dressed quietly and with guilt gnawing at her—Windust slept so trustingly, apparently having forgotten his suspicions of her in his delight at discovering a new Tolerant—slipped out of the control room, back to the passenger cabin. The safety net unfastened without difficulty now. The timewind interfered no more than a gentle breeze. Her body still did not operate as smoothly and quickly as it had on other riffs, however. She felt no excitement as she returned to searching the courier. The fun had gone, she realized. Only a sense of obligation remained.

With a picture of the telltale section of the control panels warning-clear in her mind, she moved him just minutely, not enough to register as suspicious on the pressure telltales.

She kept an ear tuned for the opening hiss of the door, too, praying Windust remained asleep. Not only did she not want him catching

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her, she did not want to be caught by *him*. She felt too much akin to him. She saw in him what, under other circumstances, she might have become. He might even have been a friend.

Anger stirred in her, resentment of her debt. She had felt it occasionally before, but never so strongly. It plagued her while she flipped pictures through her mind, trying to imagine where she would hide the jarabon. Then her gaze fell on the yoke. What if he were hiding the jewel in plain sight? What if one of those syngems were a shell with the jarabon tucked inside it?

She reached for the yoke.

The courier's eyes opened.

Kele froze with a hand on the yoke. The two of them stared into each other's eyes for hours of eternity, then abruptly, like snakes, the courier's hands shot toward her throat.

Kele leaped backward. How could he move so fast? Was he Tolerant, too? Then she realized that he was doing as she had when Windust walked in on her, reacting purely on instinct. He saw a threat to the jarabon and reacted in defense.

She jumped, but not far enough, not soon enough. His reach was long and he rolled, coming after her. His fingers closed around her throat. He fell out of the bunk, taking her to the deck with him.

As her lungs struggled for air and her vision blurred, Kele cursed herself as a fool. She had broken an important rule; she had relaxed and become overconfident. She knew people woke in mid-flight; the steward told her so on boarding. It stood to reason that the courier, anxious about what he carried, might be one of the few, but she had overlooked that possibility. Now not only would Sperrow lose the jarabon but the services of the best thief in the Hundred Worlds.

She fought panic. She could not allow herself that; it would kill her before strangulation did. Pinned under the courier with his fingers biting ever deeper into her neck, crushing her windpipe, and with her consciousness dimming, she twisted, clawing, struggling for defense room.

To combat the panic, she created anger, fury aimed at the courier. She would not let him kill her! Damn him! Damn Sperrow, too, for getting her into this! Reason told her he could not have known this would happen, but she did not feel like being reasonable; she dared not; she needed her anger. Kele grabbed at the emotion and built on it. Sperrow had sent her into this game with a glib smile. Did he care what happened to her? Would he mind if he lost her? Probably not; he could always hire another thief.

Suddenly, with consciousness slipping away from her, she saw

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that that was true. Playing pieces did not matter, only the game. And with that realization came *real* anger, berserker fury. She owed him; she owed him a great deal, but maybe not *everything* . . . not, by God, her *life!*

She freed one arm. Her finger plunged like a dagger into the courier's eye. As he reared back, screaming, his hold loosened. She scrabbled out from under him. Air rushed into her lungs. Gasping and coughing, Kele staggered to her feet and kicked him hard under the chin.

The door hissed open. Fields of stars in a copper sky swarmed into the cabin. Windust held a pressure capsule tipped with a needle. "Telltale alarm went off warning me a passenger was coming up."

Kele coughed. She rubbed her throat. In a hoarse voice she said, "I put him down again." She drew a deep breath. The air burned all the way down her throat but reached her lungs unobstructed. She took another breath, just to reaccustom herself to the pleasure of it, then leaned against the rail of a bunk, her knees trembling.

Windust stared narrow-eyed from her throat to the courier stretched out on the deck. Icy glints reflected from his starfields. "A game, you say?"

The timewind roared in her ears. "Yes, a game." She swallowed tentatively. It hurt. "But you can still die of it."

"You wrote that into the rules?"

The disgust in his voice stung. Looking up, she said quickly, defensively, "It was never *my* game. I'd like to quit."

He raised a brow. "Why don't you?"

She sighed. "Because—" Because why? She remembered her thought that she did not owe Sperrow her life. Now, massaging her neck, it occurred to her that these bruises ought to entitle her to some compensation. Could they write off part of her debt, maybe even all of it, as close as she had come to death? What if she told Sperrow that? What would happen to her then? She bit her lip, thinking of Windward's despairing streets. "Do you still think I can be accepted as a pilot candidate?" she asked.

He eyed her. "We need pilots. Training'll tell what you're made of. Besides, if anything disappears in-flight there's only one suspect." He paused. "You'd have to tell them your real name, though."

The heat and cold of guilt washed through her. So he had suspected far more than she realized. And he had still not shot her with dream dust after realizing she was a Tolerant? "Pilots are *that* important?"

"That rare," he replied.

She took a deep breath and through the pain of it, tasted freedom.

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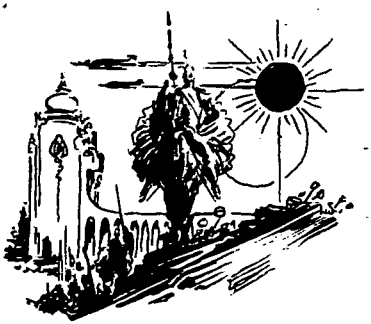
"The name is Kele Sperrow. Would you help me apply when we reach Northfire?"

He nodded, smiling as one kinsman to another. "Tolerants stick together because we've no one else. We'll all help you."

She hugged him. So she would gain a kind of family as well as a new job. That was not bad for a former gutter brat and thief, even one who had been the best in the Hundred Worlds.



SECOND SOLUTION TO THE GONGS OF GANYMEDE (from page 62)

Unless I goofed, the Pythagorologist will make 234 clockwise circuits before he goes part of another circuit to stop at the last bronze eagle and hit a gong 100 times. If a woman made the same walk, traveling counterclockwise, I calculate she would hit the gong 100 times, at the gold eagle, after completing 254 full circuits.

These calculations are simplified by the fact that each *n*th phase of the walk requires just *n* circuits except when *n* is a multiple of 5, in which case there is only one circuit.

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IMPROBABLE BESTIARY: The Thing in the Jar

The carnival is coming, with horses and a clown.
The jungle cats and acrobats and circus are in town.
The ferris wheel of shining steel, the shoot-the-rapids ride,
And one peculiar-looking tent that's standing to the side;
It's got the
Freak Show! Geek Show! Utterly Unique Show!
No-Admittance-Given-to-the-Squeamish-or-the-Weak Show!
The two-headed chicken, the eight-legged calf,
And Robert-Roberta, the Great Half-and-Half.
The midget who puffs on a three-foot cigar,
And Wonder of Wonders: *The Thing in the Jar . . .*

It's got eyes and it breathes,
And it bubbles and seethes,
And it floats in a bottle of brine.
Does it think? Does it dream?
Can it speak? *Can it scream?*
Is it part of some cosmic design?
All the people who visit and wonder "What is it?
A freak? Or a fake? Or a con?"
They may wonder and stare, or give up in despair,
But The Thing in the Jar floats on, floats on . . .

"It's an optical illusion . . ."
"A genuine Venusian . . ."
"I swear it's got a *human* face; just look into its eyes . . ."
"I bet it's made of leather . . ."
"What holds the thing *together?*"
"It *can't* be real, but if it is I hope to God it dies . . ."

Each person who pays to enter and gaze
Will think of the Thing till the end of his days.
It floats through the streams of your nightmares and dreams;
It seeps, and it sleeps, and *it's not what it seems . . .*

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The carnival is leaving; the circus doesn't stay.
The carny louts and roustabouts have packed the dreams away.
The wagons load and hit the road, the way they've done
for years . . .
And one peculiar caravan is full of dreams and fears;
It's got the
Tent show! Bent show! Ten and Twenty Cent Show!
Come-and-See-the-Strangest-Freaks-that-Nature-Can-Invent
Show!
The customers paid, and they saw the parade,
And the elephants danced, and the music was played,
But while people grow older and memories fade—
When the carnival's packed up and gone—
In their dreams, one and all, they will always recall
That The Thing in the Jar floats on, floats on . . .

—F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre

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Sam and friends, recently seen in "Balancing Act" in our 16 February 1981 issue, inform us that their creator sold his first story in 1957, but did not begin publishing regularly until after he attended the Clarion-West Workshop in 1971. His novels include Cage a Man, The Proud Enemy, Rissa Kerguelen, The Long View, *and* Zelde M'Tana. *His first story for this magazine was "Backspace" in the Winter 1977 issue.*

WRONG NUMBER

by F. M. Busby

art: Alex Schomburg

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On teevy the news was bad. Armies poised on borders, ultimatum topping ultimatum. I turned the set off. To my friend Sam, I said, "Next week, next month—how long before the Big War turns this planet to mushroom soup?"

"Good simile," Sam replied. "No matter who controls the Russian bear, always it tries to eat the world."

I nodded. "Yes, one Premier does seem to be pretty much like the next."

From below his hair, his eyebrows emerged to form a scowl. "You evade my meaning, Peter. Granted, you lack the direct recalls—but certainly I've *told* you, often enough."

Sam's talent, so far as I know, is unique. He edits events. To change something, he thinks back to causes—two days ago, or two years, or two billion—and down time's path, the alterations ripple to give us all a new history. But except to Sam himself, the new way is how things have always been.

"I'll run through it," he said, "again. You and I, Petros, grew up nervous about a version of Russia known as the Soviet Union, a gaggle of so-called socialist republics under the thumb of a predatory horror yclept the Communist Party. All stemming, mind you, from the Bolshevist takeover following the 1917 Revolution. But after I headed off World War Three . . ."

I know of only one World War, but Sam says there used to be a Second. Just as well that he deleted it; wars seldom do any real lasting good.

". . . eliminate Rasputin's influence, which was the easiest way to give the Czars another chance. So I did." I'd missed a line or two, but the continuity was obvious. Sam butted-out his cigar, and mercifully didn't reach, just yet, for another. "The change helped for a time," he said. "But maybe ten years behind the original schedule, Russian expansionism set in again. Czar Nicholas had been all right, even the first time, when he got axed. Alexander not too bad, either. But Ivan was a real pain in the tush. So, not long ago, I tried a new twist."

"The Menshevik regime? It's new?"

"Well, not exactly." Sam took a sip of his Martini. So far on this visit he hadn't begun powdering his drinks with zouch; that omission, maybe, was why I could still understand him pretty well. "Actually," he said, "in our original lines of recall, the Mensheviki figured as the more-reasonable faction of the 1917 Revolution. I appreciate reasonable people," he said. "I'm not one of them but I do appreciate them. Nonetheless, the more radical Bolsheviki aced

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them out, and—"

"You decided they deserved another shot, too? You're a tolerant man, Sam."

"To a point, only—and rapidly that point approaches." He spread his hands; luckily he'd set down the Martini first. Sam spills things a lot. "*Look* at the news. Retroactively, even. Three different Russian histories and they all play off-key—armament, pressure, subversion abroad." The Martini had died; from the six-pack he had as usual fetched along, I brought him a new can. Preoccupied, he nodded thanks. "The Russian psyche, I can't get a handle on it. Attila and his like—did they scatter genes too bountifully across the steppes? Or do I mean Temujin, who became Genghis Khan?" He shrugged. "It's hard to keep track of everything. You know that?"

Before I could answer, my wife Carla came downstairs to announce that the kids were sleepy-bye and now I could phone out for Chinese food. I didn't know the best place so I called the nearest; the result, arriving soon, was fine by me. Halfway through eating, Sam said, "This Russian contretemps. Pedro, during the next few days I shall do a thing—new, perhaps even drastic. The details can wait, but the adjectives, I assure you, will be accurate."

What to say? I settled for, "If you say so, sure."

"Next week, when I'm back in town, I'll tell you what it was that I accomplished. Meanwhile, Pitur, merely remember that I have told you I would remedy the matter."

So while Sam was gone I kept in mind that he was going to do something about Russia. Then one day I knew he'd done it, because I couldn't imagine why he'd want to. That is, he'd said he would, so there must have been a reason, and now there wasn't any. To make sense with Sam does take a strange grade of thinking. . . .

A change, then. How retroactive, I wouldn't know until Sam told me. I could hunt clues, though; playing a game with myself, I watched the teevy newscasts. One item looked promising: for the first time, an E'Gliiz was to visit the Reunited States of America.

A mystery, the E'Gliizi. Discovered in Siberia, for some seventy-five years they had maintained virtual isolation, dealing only with the local authorities—no foreigners allowed. From the few blurred pictures and fanciful descriptions that reached the outside world, the E'Gliizi could have been a variant human species or something else entirely. To most folks they were in much the same category as the Yeti or Sasquatch. Not to mention Nessie.

This visit, now: a new thing and it came from Russia. The best

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bet, then, in *my* book, to be a change made by Sam.

Next morning's newsbreak strengthened my hunch. Taped in Moskva, transmitted by satellite relay, the interview gave me my first look at an E'Gliiz. What I noticed for starters was that the creature couldn't possibly be human.

Sam's gimmick, all right, all right. But *how?*

Squinting at the shaky picture, a little at a time I made out details of appearance. Taller, the E'Gliiz was, than any of the surrounding humans. With them, though, it shared the common configuration of two legs, torso, two arms, and a head. Bare arms and trousered legs all seemed to have one extra joint—enlarged, and lumpy, like their other joints—that bent the wrong way.

Any time the color adjustment showed the humans looking at all lifelike, the E'Gliiz was a dull blue-grey, its skin covered with small, smooth scales. Longer and a little feathery over the scalp, not unlike a short fluffy haircut on a human.

Something other, the face was. Two eyes, set so widely that only at the skull's "corners" did brow ridges show. Forehead's contour curved smoothly down, lacking any bulge of nose. Below the eyes, cheekbones gave a human touch, belied by the scaled flap of tissue between them, that half-hid a horizontal nostril slit. Inhaling, that flap lifted; on the exhale it rippled and made a soft, whuffling, farting noise. Occasionally the E'Gliiz sniffed from a thin tube (plastic?) that extended from its robe's collar.

The mouth, otherwise human-looking, showed no shape of external lip tissue. The teeth were nothing special, and the E'Gliiz didn't bother to stick out its tongue for me.

All in Russian, the audio, but along with it came a running caption in rather awkward English. I read it, and was jarred:

Not native to Earth, the E'Gliizi. Their home sun is (garbled in the translation, or else I missed something). Marooned here for a time they didn't specify but I could guess: circa seventy-five years. Their spaceship had crash-landed, but with few casualties. Contact had been restricted to the Earthfolk in the immediate area—with whom the E'Gliizi worked toward mutually beneficial goals—out of a sincere wish to avoid intruding. Very considerate, yes . . .

But now the E'Gliizi would greet all the peoples of Earth, and even mingle with some. This one (no name was given), having studied several modes of human speech, would visit other parts of this hospitable planet. Starting with the Reunited States of America.

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Here the E'Gliiz switched to what it seemed to think was English. The captioning read, "To meet Americans, then others, I look forward. Areas of common benefit, I think we find. For viewing me, thank you." There was more, but all frosting on the cake.

Without the running caption I'd have missed most of it. The E'Gliizi accent defies transcription at any length. Suffice that "I think" came out sounding like "Oi sfinkt." All right?

The interview ended; the Russians turned to leave and the E'Gliiz after them, the camera following. But as the alien left the bright glare of spotlights it hesitated, then bumped face-on into the edge of a set-backdrop screen. Hands to face, making a howling whimper, it staggered. The Russians came back toward it—but the picture cut off, and with no pause our local commercial took over: the pain-killer Joan of Arc needed when she was being burned at the stake. Oh, well—the previous week, the advertiser's example had been Christ on the cross.

Awaiting Sam's return, my curiosity grew. The promised day came but he didn't. Late that evening, though, time jumped backward.

I wasn't too surprised. Besides his longterm editing, Sam has an electronic gizmo he uses for current stuff. Pushing his Backspace Key gives him another shot at the previous twenty-four hours. Others don't notice the shift. I do, because he let me use the thing once and I'm tuned to it.

On the day's rerun, Sam did arrive. I asked naught of the glitch; if it were any of my business, he'd tell me.

He didn't. In my kitchen he sat with one canned Martini from the six-pack he'd brought. I waited for him to dust his drink with the exotic powder he calls zouch, but he skipped that. So I said, "All right, Sam. Tell me why bringing an E'Gliiz over here is the cure for problems I don't recall we had, with Russia."

He looked pained. "Why do I always have to explain *all* of it?"

With Sam sulking, playing cagey, I had to ask the questions. No place, the first few got me. Then: "The E'Gliizi turning out to be aliens is news, all right. But why now?"

"Magni equii sed es." He frowned. "No, 'sed' is 'but' as a conjunction, not 'butt' as a noun. Oh, the hell with it." Narrow-eyed as he squinted then, his gaze had impact. "Until two days ago, Russian expansionism had been a major problem for some decades."

"If you say so. But what does that have to do with—?"

He cut in. "How long have the E'Gliizi been here on Earth?"

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"Er—roughly seventy-five years, isn't it?"

Sam laughed. "It is. *Today* it is. But until two days ago, the E'Gliizi hadn't been here at all."

A stopper sometimes, Sam can throw you. Through my knowledge of the way he works, I tried to thread the impossibilities. Some of them, but hardly all, made sense. "Now hold it some," I said. "I'm not questioning the scope of your abilities." Sure not—reversing Earth's rotation as he did, to blow the city's smog away from my house, not toward it? Reversing isn't quite the right word; Earth's rotation is not retrograde. Merely, before Sam's changing, it was our *North* pole that slanted toward Polaris. Astronomers got all fussed up until he remembered to edit those records, too.

To catch up with my thoughts, I paused. "But even *you*—how could you invent a species of interstellar aliens and set them here visiting, seventy-five years retroactively?"

Sam grinned. "Well, I didn't, of course. It's the Tunguska Connection."

That one needed some explaining, and Sam did. "The 1908 Siberian Meteor, the big Tunguska hit. Sighting reports indicated speeds more like re-entry than meteor-type. And the same book I read cited course changes, which meteors don't have. What if a fusion-powered spaceship, trying to land, blew up?"

I could see it coming. "What if, indeed?"

"The astronomers, mind you—dolts, all of them!—claim otherwise. They label the thing a carbonaceous chondrite, if I have the term correctly which is probable but not certain, because the blast effects don't resemble those of an H-bomb." He took a snort, then made one. "Well, I should hope not! Why should a bomb, built to blow, behave like a power plant, built *not* to blow? I mean, did Three Mile Island make a mushroom cloud?"

Out, now, came the packet of zouch. A pinch added, a stirring, a sip; then Sam said, "I find, here, a curious parallel with the strange case of Miklos the Horrendous, chief Oligarch of ancient Hibernatus. Miklos is best known for roofing his palace with the untanned hides of his political opponents, who were, thereafter, seldom heard from. Other than that—" He shook his head.

With Sam it pays to be patient. I said, "The 1908 meteorite? Or spaceship, or whatever?"

"Spaceship, I decided. Germanium traces in the Tunguska debris. Solid-state electronics? Not a cinch in the classical poker-playing

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sense of the word, but close."

I leaned forward. "So?"

"Editing from hypotheses, Petros, is not easy. Facts, now, are a snap; give me a fact and I'll turn it upside down and backwards without blinking an eye." He tipped his Martini up to get the last drops. "But if the thing were a spaceship and blew up, why couldn't it be one and *not* blow up?" He gestured widely; if he hadn't finished his drink I'd have had a wet wall. Then he folded his arms and sat back. "Russian problem solved. Q.E.D."

"How? I don't see it." Sam is like a computer except that his input is booze; I got him another Martini.

When he'd zouched it properly, he continued. "Let me adjust my thinking, Petrovitch, to the line of *your* recalls. I edited so that the E'Gliizi ship landed disabled but with only minor casualties, no loss of life. After several years, because the Tunguska is not exactly Main Street, contact was made with the central Russian government. The consequences were inevitable."

I shook my head. "I'm still not aboard, Sam."

"This is right after World War One, by now." Sipping, he waved his free hand. "All right, *the* World War, to you. The Mensheviks were running a backward country and they knew it. Everybody scared them because everybody else—ourselves, Western Europe, Japan—was more advanced. Kerensky, the first Menshevik president, was sitting on a country too big to handle and surrounded by possible foes who had him outgunned. What could he do?"

From upstairs I heard a sound. Carla, not yet asleep? If so, it might behoove me to curtail this talk. But against all inclination I heard me say, "What indeed? What *did* he do?"

"He listened to his Siberian people and played ball with the E'Gliizi. As a result, Russian technology moved fast. Not fast enough to look fishy to outsiders; the E'Gliizi aren't stupid. But of course the real benefits went the other way. All the E'Gliizi wanted was to build Russian know-how up to where it could fix their damn *ship*."

I felt and probably looked owl-eyed. The story mostly fit, but not quite. "Expansionism, Sam. The Russian threat I don't remember. Where does *that* come in?"

Sam hardly ever looks angry, but he came close. "In every other alternative, it was there. In this one, the E'Gliizi put all that drive to work on their own problem. I'd figured as much."

"Oh, sure." No sarcasm; I meant it. But still something . . . oh, yes. "Sam. If all the E'Gliizi wanted was to fix their ship and go home, why is one of them coming out, now, for the world tour?"

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Sam blinked. "I don't know." He said it slowly; then his verbal pace quickened. "I think I'll find out, though."

I suppose I looked a question at him. He said, "I wager you were unaware that I am a top reporter from a prestigious newspaper. A reporter who is automatically assigned to the *big* stories. Truth to tell, I hadn't known, either. But tomorrow I will be."

He bedded down on the living-room sofa and I went upstairs. Carla wasn't totally asleep yet. Sometimes I get lucky.

Sam was gone when I got up; in the afternoon he called me at work. "Change of plan, Piter. Addition, rather. Reporters, I find, must have photographers. Back in college, as I recall, you won prizes in that art. You know where you put your cameras?"

I said I thought so. Sam replied, "Buy lots of new film. And flash bulbs, or whatever they're using nowadays. I trust your judgment, Pietro."

"Thanks a whole bale. But then what?"

"Thursday you fly to Washington—D.C., not the state. I'll send you the tickets and meet you at the airport. In D.C., that is."

I hung the phone up and sat looking at it. I couldn't call Carla; our schedule had her sleeping, right now. So not until I was home, and that sked had us in the kitchen with Carla on her second cup of coffee, did I tell her what Sam wanted me to do.

As I expected, she didn't like the idea much. Take time off from work, fly to the East Coast, just like that? "Why?"

Carla, I realized, knew even less of the background than I did. "Sam thinks it's important," I said. "Sometimes he's right. I have this hunch, maybe I should help out."

"But not until Thursday; right?"

"Right." She nodded. "Just now," I said, "it's Tuesday."

Carla grinned. "I know."

On Thursday the 767 got me to D.C. all in one piece. Sam met me at Baggage Retrieval where I think a few Pilgrims were waiting for their gear to come off the *Mayflower*, and rushed me to his rental car before anyone put a justified ticket on it. "I got us into the hotel where they're staging the E'Gliiz's press conference," he said, and drove. If you've never ridden with Sam driving, you don't want to know, but we got there.

People complain about Contemporary Plastic hotels but actually I've come to like them more than not. They are a means, wherever one goes, of avoiding culture shock. The names, for instance, nearly all begin with H. . . .

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Next day's press conference wasn't quite a madhouse; a madhouse has attendants, to keep order. About three hundred of us were herded into an auditorium with acoustics by Alice Cooper, and left to squabble for position. The way it worked was that the large, well-organized TV crews pushed everyone else around a lot. Sam and I lucked out at the far left end of the eighth row. A TV goon tried to chase us out ("We need that spot for a camera.") but we stood fast and did our best to look mean, and he went away.

In about an hour the E'Gliiz arrived, towering over its human escorts. I began snapping pictures. On the platform a Russian took the mike; out of five minutes, what with acoustics *and* accent, I caught maybe twelve words. Then one of our own American mumblers took over; as near as I could tell, he did a rather accurate job of reporting what everyone already knew. I quit listening and squinted to watch the E'Gliiz, standing just outside the spotlight glare, and now wearing, besides its bare-arm robe, what looked like heavy sun-goggles. Also, as at the Moskva interview, I noticed the little plastic sniff-tube.

Then Mumbles beckoned the alien onto the platform, into the splash of light, and that's when it took the goggles *off*. I didn't get it; Sam was equally baffled. Hell with it; for veracity I shot a few more pics. In that glare, no flash was needed.

Conjecture got me nowhere. The interview began, Mumbles questioning the E'Gliiz. If I could have heard the questions, the answers might have made more sense; weird accent and all, the alien's words came clearer than those of the humans. After a time I figured it out; E'Gliizi speech has very little tonal range. The lousy acoustics had less to work with, to screw up. Well, Ma Bell's narrow-band phone circuits do fine with a monotone or whisper, but they'd play hell with appreciation of opera.

"Not intended, here to come, at all." The E'Gliiz, speaking. The explanation rambled, but I gathered they'd been heading for some other star system. Sam, for some reason, began taking notes.

Mumbles's next long query boiled down to "What happened?" The answer boils down, too: the ship's navigational computer got the hiccups and made a series of fast, unscheduled course changes. Resulting in total loss of designated reference points for guidance. So the E'Gliizi settled for the nearest star having a spectral classification that approximated their original destination.

Guess where? You're right.

The computer wasn't done goofing; on the landing approach it

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nearly blew the ship. "Terrible disaster, could have been. Not to us, only; damage to your world, impossible to estimate closer than nearest magnitude." Sam looked worried; I couldn't see why, because in neither alternative had it *gone* that way.

Suddenly I had to leave for a while; sometimes jet lag does me that way. By the time I got back, I knew I must have missed a lot. I asked Sam, but he went "Shush" and said he'd tell me later. So I listened while Mumbles announced that this conference, now concluded, would be followed by a smaller, more intensive session. Participants, he said, to be chosen impartially by drawing numbers out of a hat. Sam made a startled move, then nudged me. "Wait here; for the moment, my absence is a necessity."

"What—?"

"In this crowd, how can I edit?"

He left, moving rapidly. Mumbles did some hanky-panky with press-credential number slips, and one of his sidekicks drew a bunch of them from a cardboard box. If it was supposed to be somebody's hat, somebody was a bit weird. When Sam's-and-my number came out on the fourth draw, I was not terribly surprised. Who was, though, was Mumbles himself and then a TV-crew leader who grabbed Mumbles's arm and did a lot of whinging and creebing. To no effect; Mumbles was taking no blame at all.

Slowly and haphazardly our zoo began to empty. The teevy person still dithered in place; I gathered that he was used to events being edited beforehand by his friends, but not by strangers. Sam returned, and picked up our tickets for the later bash. "In two hours," he said. "We can use the resting time. Let's go."

Back in our room, I marked my boxes of exposed film and restocked. No particular reason; just staying in character. In the other room, Sam was on the phone; as I joined him he hung up. "Well, that much, at least, is settled. Try to get a simple point across!" I asked what he was talking about. He lit a cigar—the conference area had been a no-smoking bailiwick—and said it was merely a matter of helping with refreshments for the upcoming festivities.

From the refrigerator I liberated drinks. Sam said, "The parts you missed, Piterluk. Why the E'Gliiz has, of a sudden, come visiting." He cut the tale to its gist: while marooned, the E'Gliizi huddled in relative isolation, dealing with the Russians from lack of choice while profiting by the Russian yen for secrecy. "But now," Sam said, "with the ship fixed to lift again—"

"Before they all cut and run, they'll say hello?"

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"Not all, Petronius. The ship carries about three hundred. The E'Gliizi here now number, I gather, close to six figures."

"In seventy-five years? What are they, anyway? Rabbits?"

Sam broached and zouched a new Martini. "Hardly bunnies. Like insects, the E'Gliizi go through phases. The larval, for instance. The trick is that, given a special diet, the larvae can *breed*. So that if they wish to expand their population, they can have generations of three to four years." He nodded. "And they did."

I needed another beer; that need did not go unassuaged. I said, "A takeover? Hell, Sam—this sounds like a bad movie!"

"Of course. And no item becomes a cliché until it has proved *applicable* to the point of becoming tiresome."

"But how could they—?"

Waving a hand, Sam scattered cigar ash. "How, indeed? The E'Gliizi and our world suit each other very little." He pointed the cigar at me, a signal to pay attention. "You saw those heavy goggles?" I nodded. "Night vision apparatus, like the Army had, a war or two ago, to shift infra-red up into our visual spectrum. The same principle shifts our light into the ultraviolet, for the E'Gliizi. That TV spotlight setup, for instance—well, to them it's like seeing by the glow from a hotplate." He sipped; for a change, I noticed, Sam was pacing himself with the juice. He said, "To us their skin looks blue-grey; predominantly, though, it reflects in the upper UV range. To understate the case, E'Gliizi quarters aren't comfortable for humans; when the Russians visit there, they go totally swathed for skin protection, wear welding goggles, and use inhalation masks."

"Inhalation masks? Did I miss something?"

Sam half-nodded, meaning maybe I did and maybe I didn't. "The little sniffer-tube is for ozone—poison to us, but they need it. Organisms, Petrarch, evolve to need that which is available."

"I guess so. Quite a bundle of info, you picked up there."

Sam grinned. "Some I picked up, some I'm guessing." He stood. "This E'Gliiz is doing a number on all of Earth, and numbers can be hard to figure. Let us, Pedro, order up from Room Service a great bounty of chow. Because this next meeting will be boozy, if I get my money's worth from the call I was making when you entered our mutual domain here. Food forms a safer basis."

I stared. "Come on, Sam—you can't expect to get everybody drunk. Not the people who attend *press* conferences."

"Mayhap not," he said. "When we arrive, however, at this number-checking event, draw your own libations from the smaller punch-bowls at either side. Because the large one, in the middle . . ."

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Feeling stuffed, wafting garlic all around and not caring, I followed Sam into the penthouse suite. All windows, with a superb view of the smog layer below. Jammed, the place was; to the original guest list there had to be some additions. The deprived TV-crew leader, for one—but around him, now, milled only a few satellites.

Sam got right down to business. Always good with his elbows, soon he was into the central group surrounding the E'Gliiz, face to face with the alien. I saw the two of them lift and touch glasses, then drink; the E'Gliiz nose-whuffled and made a gasp. Sam gestured; I caught my cue and went for refills. On the principle of Conservation of Energy (mine), I got two for the alien. Both, of course, from the middle bowl. Most people wouldn't have noticed, but from the residual glints in that liquid, I knew it was the one Sam had zouched.

As parties go, that one went: two abortive fights, somebody passed out in a locked bathroom, the TV-boss throwing up in the goldfish. I was sorry for the goldfish, but what can you do? I waited for Sam's nod, when he had the E'Gliiz sat down with him at a table and not too many extraneous folks with them, and brought another load of zouched booze. There was room for the tray, so I set it down, and found a seat for myself.

The E'Gliiz was speaking. "So now our ship goes. And what is here, and to come, all E'Gliizi selvings will know."

Most of the folks nodded and said, "Yeah, yeah." Well, a first go with zouch does not tend to prime one up for the debate team. Although the E'Gliiz seemed to track, more than not. Different metabolisms?

Sam, though, said, "*What*, E'Gliiz, will your selvings know?"

Its head moved, something like a nod but not quite. It said, "The change, your sun here. To light we can see, can live under." It touched the heavy goggles it wore. "Not need *these*, even." It drained the primary drink I'd brought, and reached for the reserve.

Sam's hand stopped that reach. "Back a moment, friend. Our sun, you say, changes? This, I do believe, is a new wrinkle. Enlighten me, why don't you? It is not," he said, "a number known to me."

With a shudder, the alien's movements froze; like a diarrhetic horse, the nostril flap sounded. Even zouched, the E'Gliiz realized it had spilled the legumes. But then came a shake of head, and the next words sounded calm. "No difference, can make now. Four of your hours, our ship goes. Achieves beam contact soon, informs home world. Equipment arrives, to convert your sun's spectrum. Ten of

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your years—" The twitch that wasn't really a shrug. "—maybe twenty. Quantities, as expert in contacts personal, not my specialty. But all well, will be."

Sam is seldom rude unless he means to be; I doubt he realized he grabbed the alien's remaining drink and gulped it. "You're going to change our *sun*—so that you can live here and we can't?"

Shrug-twitch. "Could you stop us, elsewhere we go. But here—what we can take—no need, I think."

Sam's eyes, then, mirrored murder. He's smarter than that, but for a moment I wasn't sure. Then he looked to me. "Four hours—from here to Russia, no chance of aborting that launch."

Panic, I felt. "Sam. Ten or twenty years—we can build weapons—we can—"

"Horse puckie." He grinned. "I have a better idea." In the side pocket of his jacket, a bulge showed a finger movement.

And then, all at once, it was the previous day.

In our hotel room, newly arrived, just starting to have drinks, I said, "What good is this? Can you stop the ship from taking off? Or will you try to talk them out of it?"

"No. Peter the Reliable, will you go to a movie or something? I need a ration of total privacy."

So I went out. I don't have to have a house fall on me; when it comes to hints, a small shed will do nicely. Never mind what I did, except that beer was on the agenda—because the previous next day's excesses, if you follow me, did not exist. Topless dance, after a time, wasn't all that great to watch. So I went back to the hotel.

"Sam?" I said. "What the hell will we *do?*"

He waved me to a seat. "Nothing."

"Those ultraviolet freaks kill us and take our world?"

"No." Handing me a beer without taking one for himself was strange enough, but the way Sam looked at me, then, was even stranger. He said, "This is the first time, isn't it, that you've been around while I was editing things and they were still fluxing?"

"I'm not sure." I was still sore, though. "You go to sit on the Russians, Sam, and you land us with a nose-farter who's out to kill off us *and* the Russians." I knew I was being unfair, but it was hard to stop. All I could say was, "Am I wrong?"

"Not exactly," Sam said. "But as was the case with Heinrich the Unspeakable, whom I deleted from the Ninth Century in the Baltic Peninsula, I have now scrubbed a number of recent events."

I confessed my lack of understanding. Sam said, "First I fixed it

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so the E'Gliizi ship didn't explode over Tunguska. Not a bad idea, I thought, but—well, you heard how it went. So I changed my mind, retroactively."

I asked how.

"Their navigational computer never malfunctioned at all. So they did not, Peter, come here. Instead, the E'Gliizi reached their original destination."

The idea bothered me. "But what if there are people *there?*"

Sam shrugged. "Hardly likely. If the E'Gliiz had his coordinates halfway right, that star went nova about sixty years ago. And Pete—that *is* out of my editing range."

Sometimes Sam takes a minute to figure. I said, "But *now* what will you do about the Russian threat?"

"Something else, I guess."

When Sam gets a wrong number, he changes the directory.

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PACKING UP

by

P. J. MacQuarrie

art: Alex Schomburg

This is the first short fiction sale by a freelance writer who resides on the edge of Missouri's Ozark Mountains, and reportedly writes while staring out at red-tailed hawks soaring over the Shoal Creek valley, and converses with two felines who bring in news of the outside world along with an occasional southern bog lemming. What becomes of the lemmings, we are not told. Writers can be a secretive bunch sometimes.

"Then I was sliding down this slippery thing, like maybe I was inside a snake . . ."

Zekie paused and put the tips of his fingers together and studied them. His face was rosy and he smelled of bath water and clean pajamas. Bart noticed Zekie's toes under the covers wiggling up and down, up and down, always a tip-off. Zekie was fabricating.

"And then I came out. All of a sudden! And I was in my own space bucket, zooming around, zoom, zoom, and I started to crash and the bucket went down so fast it started to burn up—"

"Zekie," Bart interrupted gently, "this isn't the same dream you told me this morning. Did you have two dreams last night?"

Zekie glanced at Bart quickly through his long lashes, the look of a young animal contemplating the next move. "Dokky, is your beard real?"

"You know it's real, pardner. You've tugged on it many times. Are you sure you had this dream last night?"

"I think I did. Anyhow, I might dream it tonight. Again."

"You won't dream that dream tonight. When you talk about your dreams, you give them away. You've given that dream to me."

"I'll get new ones."

"Maybe. But you'll go right to sleep, and you won't wake up until morning. Because you're tired. *So tired*," Bart went on more softly,

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"You'll be asleep when the lights go down."

Zekie gazed at him with half-lidded eyes. "We get to see the new animals at school tomorrow, Dokky."

"That sounds all right to me," Bart whispered. He touched the light control, and the room lights dimmed slowly.

Zekie was the first each night because he was the youngest. Of all the family, he alone seemed happy to see Bart at bedtime; in fact, it was obvious that Zekie could hardly wait for his short and squarish Dr. Markov to plod through his doorway each evening. Zekie saved up his monsters and disasters through the day, waiting for this moment to unleash them. Should Bart ever be delayed in keeping his appointment with Zekie, he could only envision an explosion of green lashing tails, dripping fangs, oozing messes with sly bulging eyes, and rockets going wrong and disintegrating like fireworks against the night sky of space.

Tonight Zekie was well on his way to sleep as Bart left the room. Bart could take pride in that fact. This was one household where no child would awake in the night and bring the parents running. Undisturbed sleep was of paramount importance here, and part of Bart's job was to secure it for each member of the Mellewin family.

Bart proceeded along the white streamlined hall, a seamless tunnel, ceiling curving into walls curving into floor. Maybe Zekie's complicated creatures were an attempt to provide some furnishings for this featureless architecture. He couldn't blame Zekie for that; Bart often played pictures from his own mind against these stark walls. Lately he'd been seeing clouds lit by sunset, changing color second by second, hovering over mountain peaks. The bulk of his next holiday, he vowed, would be spent sitting immersed to the neck in a spring-fed thermal pool after a long hike up a mountain.

He knocked at Tam's door.

"Doctor Bart?" Her voice was a bit too high, fluttering, fringed with worries.

"It's me, Tam."

"Come in." She flew immediately into it, even before he was through the door. "I know I won't sleep tonight, no matter what you say. No one could sleep with all my problems."

He sat in a chair by her bed. "Let's talk."

She sighed. "It's the fourth level. The whole fourth level, against me."

It was typical of her, but it always struck him as incongruous, Tam's serious manner forever at odds with her joyful coloration. Coppery hair, eyes at once green and brown—the bright tropical

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bird believing itself to be a mournful turkey vulture.

"Against you? Why?"

"They're nine and I'm eight. That's about it." This freckled child should have been dreaming up pranks to plague him.

"What do they do?"

"Oh, they just hate me, that's what they do. They ignore me, and they say terrible things about me."

"How many? Name them."

"Tressa . . . Cody . . . maybe Bianca, sometimes, and . . ." She broke off and searched, frowning at the wall.

"I think Tressa, Cody, and Bianca may be all I can handle anyway. Hand 'em over."

Tam turned to him, astonished. Then she giggled, a delightful bird-chirp. "Doctor Bart! We haven't done that since I was in third level."

"Come on, give them up."

She took a deep breath, laughter showing at the corners of her eyes. Then she rubbed her temples and cupped her hand over her right ear.

"Here's Cody." She reached out as if giving him something. His hand went to the pocket of his tunic, then held the flap down.

"Here's Tressa. And here's Bianca. You can have them! For keeps!"

"Not for keeps. Just for tonight, so you can sleep. Girls! Quit kicking!"

Tam slid down in her bed. "You know, you're the nicest of all the live-ins we've had."

He smiled as he murmured her litany. She'd always been one to fall asleep quickly, sometimes before he could tell her she would; but he gave his full attention to the intonations of her evening chant about being relaxed and sleepy. He touched the light control.

If he could choose children for his own, he thought, he would choose Tam and Zekie.

But once in the brightly lit hall, he forgot them and saw the clouds again, from his high vantage point where he imagined himself soaking in his moss-lined pool. With his left hand, he could reach out and feel the grass growing up between his fingers, touch the alpine flowers. And there, beside him in the pool, he placed Olivia Shyre, a woman who had gone through live-in training with him and twenty-eight other trainees, just four months ago. Her face appeared to him gradually, as if he were sculpting the delicate embrasures of the eyes, the arched not-quite-prominent nose, the full lips with the little quirk to them. It was hard to believe he had known her

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so briefly. The training had been rushed, because live-ins were in great demand.

His whole life had been rushed, it seemed, ever since he had taken the tests. Before that, he had been an unpromising student, headed happily for the work he liked best: either gardening or a position with a family as mechanic in charge of their various vehicles. With this goal, he'd enrolled in a local domestic college. But the tests given there revealed him as a bright underachiever, indicated he might fit into the very highest domestic classification.

He was whisked over to the Central Psychology Institute. Evidently his understanding of grass, trees and flowers, his affinity for tinkering with mechanical contrivances and figuring them out, meant more than anyone had realized. His gifts could be applied to people, too.

So he entered the quiet scholarly halls of Central Psych, first for the intensive basics, then the whirlwind live-in training, finding himself motivated for the first time to retain all he read and heard. He'd had misgivings at first—had the tests been in error? But he found he could hold his own.

He felt comfortable with the other students; most had been yanked out of other programs too. They would not be actual doctors of psychology as their professors were, but a corps of specially trained counselors, live-in psychologists, dealing with individuals and family units. They were given the title Doctor for use on the job, to establish their positions in the households they served.

Life at the Mellewins' had been good; Bart mingled with the family but also enjoyed the belowstairs camaraderie with the rest of the staff, who cooked, cleaned and maintained the Mellewins' possessions. But he took all his meals with the family in order to regulate their mealtime confrontations.

He lived in a state of amazement, grateful for his good fortune, proud. Most of the time, he felt he was in the right place. He tended some of the family like flowers, carefully and tenderly, and some of them like machines, making little adjustments here and there to see if they'd run better. Now and then, when they didn't respond like flowers or machines, he worried. But he always got them to sleep.

Too soon, Colin's door. It was definitely closed.

"Go away, Doc! I don't need a psychologist tonight!"

"Colin, I'd like to talk to you."

There was a silence. "Frankly, I'd rather stay awake. It's my room and my life."

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"Great. Just let me say goodnight. And I wanted to tell you what happened today."

A hesitation. Any conversation with Colin was destined to be anchored down here and there with hesitations. "Was it your day off?"

"Yes."

". . . Come in."

Colin was up, standing in the middle of the room, but he had his dark, pacing-the-floor look. A runner, forced inexplicably to stop and chat in the middle of the five-thousand-meter event.

Colin usually took the longest of the three Mellewin children. His concerns went deeper, holding fast with their fourteen-year root length. And every day meant starting over with Colin, tinkering with the works. The hard-won rapport of the day before never carried over.

Bart persuaded him to sit down and then launched into a description of the comedians he'd seen at the cultural center that afternoon. He remembered the routines, line by line, and mimicked the players well. He watched a better performance, though, playing across Colin's face; sullen anger mixed with anticipation, dignified aloofness in the grips of a half-emerging belly-chuckle, then rueful, penitent, capitulating laughter.

"That was it. Brought down the house."

Hesitation. "I'd like to go there."

Bart said nothing. It was his turn to wait . . . wait . . . wait.

"I never will," said Colin. "They'll never let me go anywhere, all my life. When will they let me go?"

"You want some freedom."

"I want lots of it! Look what they expect of me. I'm supposed to be super at everything, but at the same time I'm allowed to do nothing. Zip, to school. Zip, back. Can't hang around with my friends at all. I'm living the life of a bored old man."

"I'd like to talk to your mother and father about this."

"You'd make them let me do what I want?"

"Not everything all at once. But we'd talk about some freedom, now."

Skepticism mixed with walled-in hope. A half-hearted "Great." What freedom Bart could negotiate wouldn't be nearly enough for Colin, but it would be a start.

"That," said Bart, "is now on my agenda, not on yours. You can erase it from your list for tonight. The lights are going down now."

Colin got into bed, looking as though he'd like to say something

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else, but Bart had a lot of work ahead of him.

"Are you erasing?"

"I'm wearing a hole in the paper."

"Fine. It should be all gone by the time the lights . . . are . . . out."

He left, wearing a heavy invisible cloak about his shoulders. He shrugged the mysterious garment off (what was it, anyway?) and slipped deeper into his warm pool. The cloak had been Colin, he admitted; but he didn't want to ask himself why.

The pool felt cooler, and he couldn't seem to put Olivia back into it. The vision faded. He needed to hurry. The adults took even longer than Colin; it would be late by the time Bart could get them all tucked in. He gave up the daydream and sped on to Aunt Muff's room.

Auntie Muff was the children's great aunt. Where did she get her clothes? It was hard to believe she was born only seventy-two years ago; she seemed to have stepped out of a past so remote no one could recall it.

Tonight she was settled in her bed, wearing a lace cap and a frilly, beribboned gown. She had told him about her research into old books and photographs, but she would never reveal who was copying the clothing for her.

"Doctor Markov, come in. I've been drifting off to sleep by myself, you took so long with the children! But of course I snap awake every time I close my eyes." She sighed noisily.

It seemed a fragment of her research kept returning, an illustration showing a man wearing a tunic with an intricately embroidered sash slung over the shoulder. Each time she drifted off to sleep, she would dream of trying to embroider such a sash. She'd struggle clumsily with the stitches, snap awake, then drift off and start the embroidery again.

"And I can't even have a sash like that. It was for a man." She pushed fretfully at the gray curls around the edge of her cap.

"You could have a sash like that, you know. I know it's not done now, but didn't you tell me how women used to copy men's fashions? Let's see, the man-tailored shirts, the little short trousers held at the knee—"

"Knickers. But women didn't copy this sash."

"Not then. But you're free to do what you want, now. You'll be the first woman ever to have one."

She smiled. "Perhaps I will."

He left Muff drowsing off with nary a snap to interrupt her and jogged wearily along the hall. Scarcely time to think of sunsets or

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Olivia, but he tried. If only he'd had time to know her better! All he owned of her was a small stack of friendly letters. Now he mentally moved her to his second-choice vacation spot, to the edge of a misty ocean the color of frozen emeralds. Olivia was running just ahead of him, leaving her footprints in the dark wet sand. She was shorter than he, the small and tantalizing Olivia; her long dark hair, pulled back, swung as she ran. But something else was pattering along after Bart, something concerning Aunt Muff. Maybe this was the sea of senility, because hadn't Muff been getting stranger and stranger? He slowed; the questions about Muff and Colin bumped into him; the sand and Olivia disappeared.

This bit with Muff and Colin. Maybe tonight he should call in. Wasn't that what Central Psych was standing by for? He shouldn't use it too much, but it could be a comfort. It helped in sorting things out, reminded you that you always had someone behind you who cared. He'd consider it. Maybe his daydream was prophetic; maybe he needed that vacation.

Meaghan Mellewin's door was open. He entered warily and dragged a chair to a distance of approximately twelve feet from her bed. He sat waiting as she stared at him from a confusion of pastel satin bed pillows.

"And how are you tonight?" he began.

"I don't know. I can't sleep. I won't, I know it."

"That's what everyone's been telling me. Does it run in the family or what?"

Her fingers plucked at the cover as she looked around the room.

"I wish you could love me, Bart," she said in a small voice.

There it was. He had sensed her getting ready to surround him for almost a week. "Mrs. Mellewin—"

"Meaghan. You used to call me Meaghan."

"If there's some problem between us, everything else could start to go. My relationship with the children—"

"You wouldn't leave!" She sat up straight, alarmed. She could have been beautiful, with her mass of dark curly hair and light blue eyes. But her beauty was blurred by obesity. She was a lovely lily potted in a cumbersome container. "You're the best live-in we've had. The one before you was terrible. No one got any decent sleep, and the children! They'd wake up with circles under their eyes, even Zekie."

"There's no danger of me going. And you must understand that your feelings are natural. But we need to talk about this." If he'd followed his instincts and headed this off earlier, he was thinking

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bitterly, it would have been easier. "Your problem may be slightly different than you see it. There may be an overwhelming need for something in your life, but it may be something you don't suspect."

He gave her pep talk number eighteen, the vaguely ambiguous one that leads them to believe there are better days ahead without being too specific. Then he led into the benediction, the special one that would nudge Meaghan to sleep.

When you're able to do so much for a person, for a person's mind, that mind sometimes thinks it's in love. A professor had warned them of that.

It was true he was the best live-in the family had had; with some creative persuasion and near-hypnotic gambits, he'd bought them quite a lot of peaceful sleep. And he'd invested his time well, listening to them, listening, listening. But to be truthful, he couldn't have made such progress here without the constant strength of Central Psych behind him, that band of experts loyally standing by, willing to listen to him. Maybe he would call tonight.

Bart slowly trekked on toward Clarence Mellewin's room, leaving the sleepy Meaghan behind him. Building her self-confidence would be the next step, but it would be a long time before she would feel strong enough to stop falling in love with the household help.

Back to Olivia. It didn't work. He found the mist had lifted and the sea looked hot and ordinary rather than mysterious. No Olivia. Hang the sand, the sea! Colin, Muff, Meaghan—he trailed them along like coattails of smoke. Maybe he would call Central Psych; this was too much. No, no, it wasn't, he reasoned quickly. The calls add up, so save them for the really rotten times. He could take care of this. Everything would be all right in the morning. Everyone on the right path. Easy. Easier than the three trailing ghosts would have him believe.

"Where have you been?" Clarence Mellewin bellowed, his scarecrow head popping out his door. "I'm not paying a live-in psychologist to lollygag around the corridors."

The tall stick figure in green pajamas charged around his bedroom. "Where have you been, Markov? Telling Ezekiah those lengthy bedtime stories?"

Hyper-Mellewin. He'd never slow down long enough to fall in love with anybody, so Meaghan could forget that. Probably she had.

Bart turned a chair around, straddled it. He sternly indicated Mellewin's bed; the man frowned and threw himself down.

"Now." Bart always said "now" to Mellewin.

"You've got your work cut out tonight, Doc. I've got a doozy for

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you." Mellewin rubbed his face, up and down, from his balding head to his long chin.

"Worse than last night?"

"Oh, *ho!*" Mellewin rolled his eyes. "After a day like yesterday, nothing could be worse, right? Wrong. Today I learn our plant's number 2 stack cleaner is inoperative and probably has been the better part of a week." He glared, waiting for an appropriate response.

"So the number 2 stack—"

"Has been spewing out the raw stuff all over Lower Thornton."

"How serious is it?"

"Serious? It's damned serious! Heads will roll!" Mellewin lunged toward Bart, almost coming out of the bed.

"Aside from heads rolling, what will it do to Lower Thornton?"

"Aw, nothing. Dirty up some rooftops and we'll have to clean them up. Cost like crazy. The stuff from number 2 is harmless, just filthy. It's just that heads will roll, man! And me with the—"

"Clarence, shut up." It was the proper thing to say, because Mellewin actually expected Bart to say "shut up" at some point in every conference with him. Without this bit of ritual, they could not communicate.

"I'm asking you to remember the fueling incident in May."

Mellewin stared at him, eyebrows raised and mouth open, a more convincing comedian than Bart had seen all day.

"At that time," Bart went on, "you turned it to your advantage."

"Yes," Mellewin began slowly, then rushed on. "Of course, I didn't really *turn* it. The facts were the facts. I just pointed them out. The fueling mistake harmed no one, but made us aware of the need for new procedures. Which I then outlined. Came out with a promotion."

"Is there any chance . . . ?"

Mellewin was racing ahead. "Yes, yes, I can come up with a positive picture on the cleaner fiasco. And I think I know what it is."

"And?"

"I'm storing it away for use in the morning. Now I'm going to sleep." Mellewin liked to feel he was, ultimately, in control of the sleep situation rather than acknowledging any dependence on Bart's ministrations.

Lights down.

"You're worth every penny, Markov," said Mellewin sleepily. Bart, on the way to the door, was caught by surprise and almost let a laugh escape into the dark. It had been a simple, tried solution. Why hadn't Mellewin thought of it first?

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He paced the long corridor again, back toward his own quarters, toward rest. But he felt he was trudging directly into tomorrow, a puffing engine pulling the family with their freight of worries behind him, Zekie and his monsters gaily waving from the brightly painted caboose.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow Aunt Muff would worry about her choice of apparel for the day. Then she'd worry that her indecision might be a sign of failing. Meaghan would need channeling into some peppy activity, preferably at a good distance from Bart. If he directed the breakfast conversation to fitness, would she join her exercise class again?

And Mellewin and the kids—they'd have to be shored up for reentry to daytime, to work and school, each requiring a little pre-game conference.

Bart fell down on his bed fully clothed. The fatigue of his mind had seeped into his body, displacing all but enough energy to hit the room lights.

He drifted into the anteroom of sleep, where snakes wore embroidered sashes but kept losing them for lack of shoulders. Here, Meaghan embraced a number 2 stack cleaner. And there, Tam collected three more of her peers and stuffed them into her left ear for later delivery to him. There was Colin, floating free in space but screaming for more freedom, more! And Zekie, lugging in bigger monsters and staging fierier disasters!

Suddenly he was not falling asleep. He could have been a steel girder lying there on the bed, a girder left over from the assembly of the unfriendly structure around him. He tried relaxing, muscle by muscle. He erased everything and mentally threw the Mellewins, one by one, out his bedroom door.

No sleep. It angered him to know he couldn't overcome his tensions, that all the tricks he possessed for helping his clients would not work for him.

Bart turned the lights up and touched the numbered buttons on his console, grabbed the communicator. Central Psych answered promptly.

"Good evening. This is Dr. Zorka," said a deep voice.

"Markov."

"Yes . . . Dr. Markov, go ahead," droned Zorka.

Bart smiled and lay back on his bed and told Zorka of the evening's confessions. He fed them all into the communicator, starting with Zekie's snake.

How good it felt to throw all this garbage on Zorka! Not something

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to be done routinely—it would alert Central Psych to a live-in who couldn't handle the job—but such a blessed relief when he needed it. Now and then, he could take advantage of the service and, afterward, get a solid night's sleep. Live-ins needed their sleep, too; and this worked for him.

Zorka made all-purpose monosyllabic comments here and there. How could Zorka stand all the trash he heard from sleep-hungry live-ins? Most of it was far worse than the Mellewins' laments. What kind of a man was he? Bart had met only a handful of professors during his training, never Zorka.

Bart told Zorka about the occupancy of his pocket by Tam's classmates. Zorka chuckled a chuckle that was almost an echo of Bart's, and Bart went on, feeling the trash roll away from him.

It was a good system. The Mellewins fed Bart all their worries; he helped them find solutions or took the worries away with him, as he'd done for Tam tonight. "Pack up all my cares and woe," began a song Aunt Muff had unearthed in the archives. Dr. Markov is here; he'll pack up your cares and woes and take them away in his pocket. And Dr. Zorka will take Dr. Markov's cares away in his pocket. Who would take away Zorka's woes?

Someone, no doubt. Someone cared. The whole chain was one of helping and caring, with the live-ins at the grass roots, feeding troubles up the line. Without this support, a person couldn't handle it.

Bart dimmed the lights as he talked; he was beginning to relax now. He told Zorka he thought he hadn't done that much for Meaghan tonight, but when he paused, Zorka only said, "Mmm." To be expected. Any discussion was out, of course. Central Psych could never handle all the live-in traffic at night if there were conferences; the chance to report it all was supposed to be enough. For a real consultation, Bart would have to appear at Central Psych and talk with someone else. He'd never done that. It was considered a last resort, and though it was supposedly an acceptable practice, everyone knew it was not without risk to the live-in's career. Reporting this way was safer; it made the live-in aware of new possibilities and enabled him or her to let loose of some worries and get to sleep.

A new possibility was forming now. Maybe, Bart was thinking as he went on talking, he could have skipped this entire recital, could have just sat up all night and thought. Once, when he'd been close to overusing Central Psych, he'd done that; and a solution had come to mind, almost sneaking up on him. He hadn't gotten much sleep, but he'd been pleased with himself. Was that what Colin had been

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saying, when he yelled he'd rather stay awake? That he wanted to work things out for himself?

Bart finished his monologue. "That's all. Thanks for listening, Zorka." It was the approved way to end a report.

"Thank you, and good night." Zorka always signed off the same way.

"Wait." It was impulsive; he couldn't resist trying out his half-formed theory on Zorka, rules or not. Zorka might be interested. Bart rushed through it. "You know, I've been musing about what I'm doing for these people. Sure, it's beneficial. Sure, they get their sleep. But I *am* depriving them of worry, and maybe there's a function to the process of worrying. Maybe they should be worrying sometimes instead of sleeping. Maybe we're taking short cuts, making them too comfortable, putting everyone to beddy-bye before they have a chance to think things through."

The instructions from Central Psych were clear. You could report if you felt the need, then you were to sign off promptly.

"So what do you think, Zorka?"

There was a click.

The communication was terminated. Bart sat up and stared at the console, bewildered, then insulted. After months of reporting to Zorka, didn't they have a relationship that could transcend rules once in a while? Couldn't he expect Zorka to break down and toss off a little professional repartee?

Something inside him, something he hadn't known was dwelling there, broke loose. He punched the console buttons furiously and began talking before Zorka could speak.

"Dammit, Zorka, you could at least give me a minute—"

"Good evening, this is Dr. Zorka." That same deep voice rolled on, oblivious to Bart's tirade, with exactly the same inflection as before.

Then there was a silence, a sort of humming silence. Bart couldn't even hear Zorka breathing. Had he ever heard him? The question hung there: was Zorka indeed a breathing being? A breathing, caring being? With a dreadful certainty, the question hung, a weighty thing on a metal ceiling hook, already tagged with the answer.

A faint cool tingling ran over Bart's face and then over the surface of his entire body, like a blush of ice.

"Washout," said Bart deliberately.

"Yes . . . Dr. Washout, go ahead."

Bart lay back and stared at the seamless ceiling, turned pinky-white by the glow from the console. Zorka, the amazing machine. Bart took the Zorka-machine apart inside his mind, examined the

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intricate electronic circuitry that could make the Zorka-voice repeat the caller's name, say, "Mmm," and chuckle.

Bart reached out and shut the console down, button after button. Darkness.

Alone. Ultimately, one is, Bart thought. Alone, each of us.

His first impulse was to run out into the night, to throw himself down someplace miles from anyone, to feel the grass growing up between his fingers. His next impulse was to find Olivia, tell her, take her away with him.

Alone, each of us, all alone.

It would be a hard lesson, but somehow he would get them through it. The children, at least. Colin! Colin had a head start on all of them, even on Bart. Bart would only confirm Colin's suspicions about independence.

But Bart would at least get the kids through this lesson, before packing up and heading out for a long holiday at the mountain-top pool, with or without Olivia. At the mountain top, or the shore of the frosted emerald sea.

When morning came, he still lay awake.

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END GAME
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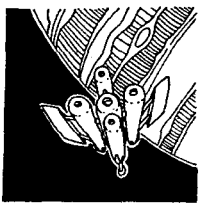


Palindromes all:
"Madam, I'm Adam," and
"Able was I ere I saw Elba,"
and this:

Man the Transfixed, light of eye! An impossible dream was practicality now, and things undreamed made reality. Equations, wrought over years, proved time reversable.

Success! —With bitterly crowned Work his god perpetual. Obscurity! —Fell and bowed, he conquers terror.

Cried he, clapping hands quickly, "REVERSE, Time! I must know what is Truth . . ."

Thunder. Distant sound.

Questions posed shake universes like constructs: constructs, like universes, shake posed questions, sound distant thunder. Truth is—what?

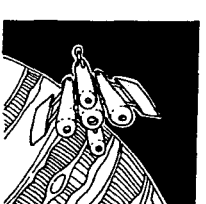
"No, must I? . . . Time, reverse—quickly!" hands clapping, he cried.

Terror conquers. He bowed and fell. Obscurity perpetual.

God, his work crowned bitterly with success. . . . Reversable time proved years over-wrought. Equations' reality made undreamed things, and now practicality was dream impossible.

An eye of light transfixed the man.

This, and
"Able was I ere I saw Elba,"
and "Madam, I'm Adam":
all palindromes.



Don Simpson: art
Brian Aldiss
GAME END

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THE SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR
by Erwin S. Strauss

There aren't many con(vention)s in the holiday season, so here's a preview of next year's cons. Enjoy a social weekend with your favorite SF authors, editors, artists and fellow fans. Contact a con in your area soon. When writing, send an SASE (addressed, stamped envelope). For a longer, later list, an explanation of cons, and a sample of SF folksongs, send me an SASE at 9850 Fairfax Sq. #232, Fairfax VA 22031. (703) 273-6111 is the hot line. If a machine answers, leave your area code number and I'll call back at my expense. Look for me at cons.

Darkover Grand Council Meeting. For info, write: **Himmelsbach, 308 W. Duval, 1st floor, Philadelphia PA 19144.** Or phone: **(215) 842-3491** (10 am to 10 pm only, not collect). Con will be held in: Wilmington DE (if city omitted, same as in address) On: 27-29 Nov., 1981. Guests will include: C. J. ("Well of Shiuan") Cherryh, Marion Zimmer (Darkover) Bradley, Mark (Samurai Cat) Rogers, Katherine (Deryni) Kurtz, Paul Edwin ("Survivors") Zimmer. 6-hour writing workshop with MZB (extra charge), masquerade, medieval combat.

ConCave, Park City KY. Park Mammoth Resort (I-65 exit 48), 4-6 Dec. 24-hour party room.

Philcon. Philadelphia PA, 4-6 Dec. Philadelphia Sheraton Hotel. Joe ("Mindbridge") Haldeman, artist Darrell Sweet. 45th annual edition of the world's first SF convention.

WindyCon, Box 2572, Chicago IL 60690. 18-20 Dec., 1981. Larry ("Ringworld") Niven, Glyer.

HexaCon, c/o Newrock, RD2, Box 270A, Flemington NJ 08822. Lancaster PA, 8-10 Jan., 1982. Artists Kelly ("Art of SF") Freas and Phil ("Capture") Foglio. All-you-can-eat banquet.

ChattaCon, Box 921, Hixon TN 37343. (615) 842-9363. Chattanooga TN, 15-17 Jan. Larry (Known Space) Niven, W. A. (Bob) Tucker, S. Webb. Banquet, masquerade, 24-hour party.

MagiCon, 4567 Cerise Ave., New Orleans LA 70127. 23-24 Jan.

ConFusion, AASFA, Box 1821, Ann Arbor MI 48106. (313) 485-4824. 29-31 Jan. Phyllis Eisenstein, N. Rest, Larry Tucker. Banquet, costumes, snow creature contest.

ScouseCon, c/o Evans, 77 Selby Rd., Orrell Park, Liverpool, England L9 8EB, UK. 13-14 Feb.

EatonCon, Slusser, U. Library, Box 5900, U of C, Riverside CA 92517. Academic conference.

UpperSouthClave, Box U122, Coll. Hts. Sta., Bowling Green KY 42101. Park City KY, 5-7 Mar. Irvin Koch. Another relaxacon at the Park Mammoth Resort. 24-hour party room, hot pool.

SwannCon, Collins, Col. of Hum., Fla. Atl. U., Boca Raton FL 33431. (305) 395-5100, x2358. 10-13 Mar. This academic conference is named after the late author Thomas Burnett Swann.

AprilCon, B-C SF Soc., 317 Ferris Booth Hall, Columb. U., New York NY 10027. 12 Apr. Disch.

SkyCon, SG Books, 38 Wall, Asheville NC 28801. 15-16 May. H. (Mission of Gravity) Clement.

High Plains, 1206 W. 18th, Amarillo TX 79120. 18-20 Apr. The postponed 2nd annual edition.

TexarCon, Box 6643, Texarkana TX. 14-16 May. Gordon R. (Dorsai) Dickson, Kelly & Polly Freas, Robt. ("Mythconceptions") Asprin, filker Margaret Middleton. Masquerade, banquet.

SF Con, 337 Harford Rd., Syracuse NY 13208. (315) 454-3020. 18-20 June. J(anet) O. Jeppson MD, dragging along her husband I*S*A*A*C A*S*I*M*O*V. 5th annual (formerly Conebulus).

ChiCon IV, Box A3120, Chicago IL 60690. 2-6 Sep., 1982. A. Bertram (Rim Worlds) Chandler, Kelly Freas, Lee Hoffman. The 1982 World SF Con. Join in 1981 for $40 and save $10.

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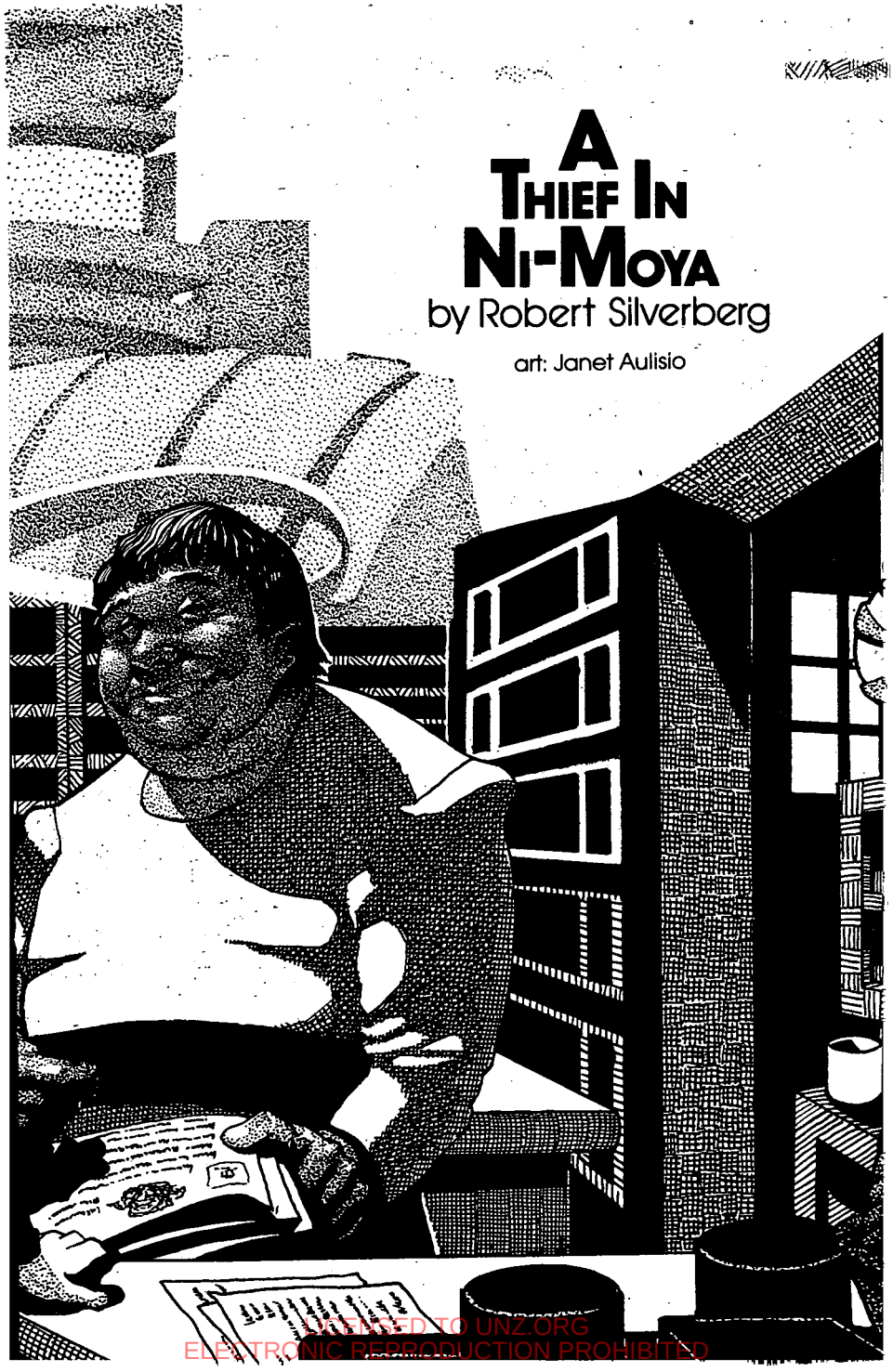
A Thief In Ni-Moya

by Robert Silverberg

art: Janet Aulisio



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A tale set in the gigantic world of
Lord Valentine's Castle . . . .

1.

Inyanna's mother had been a shopkeeper in Velathys all her life, and so had Inyanna's mother's mother, and it was beginning to look as though that would be Inyanna's destiny too. Neither her mother nor her mother's mother had seemed particularly resentful of such a life; but Inyanna, now that she was nineteen and sole proprietor, felt the shop as a crushing burden on her back, a hump, an intolerable pressure. She thought often of selling out and seeking her real fate in some other city far away, Piliplok or Pidruid or even the mighty metropolis of Ni-moya, far to the north, that was said to be wondrous beyond the imagination of anyone who had not beheld it.

But times were dull and business was slow and Inyanna saw no purchasers for the shop on the horizon. Besides, the place had been the center of her family's life for generations, and simply to abandon it was not an easy thing to do, no matter how hateful it had become. So every morning she rose at dawn and stepped out on the little cobbled terrace to plunge herself into the stone vat of rain-water that she kept there for bathing, and then she dressed and breakfasted on dried fish and wine and went downstairs to open the shop. It was a place of general merchandise—bolts of cloth and clay pots from the south coast and barrels of spices and preserved fruits and jugs of wine and the keen cutlery of Narabal and slabs of costly sea-dragon meat and the glittering filigreed lanterns that they made in Til-omon, and many other such things. There were scores of shops just like hers in Velathys; none of them did particularly well. Since her mother's death, Inyanna had kept the books and managed the inventory and swept the floor and polished the counters and filled out the governmental forms and permits, and she was weary of all that. But what other prospects did life hold? She was an unimportant girl living in an unimportant rain-swept mountain-girt city, and she had no real expectation that any of that would change over the next sixty or seventy years.

Few of her customers were humans. Over the decades, this district of Velathys had come to be occupied mainly by Hjorts and Liimen—and a good many Metamorphs, too, for the Metamorph prov-

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ince of Piurifayne lay just beyond the mountain range north of the city and a considerable number of the shapeshifting folk had filtered down into Velathys. She took them all for granted, even the Metamorphs, who made most humans uneasy. The only thing Inyanna regretted about her clientele was that she did not get to see many of her own kind, and so, although she was slender and attractive, tall, sleek, almost boyish-looking, with curling red hair and striking green eyes, she rarely found lovers and had never met anyone she might care to live with. Sharing the shop would ease much of the labor. On the other hand, it would cost her much of her freedom, too, including the freedom to dream of a time when she did not keep a shop in Velathys.

One day after the noon rains two strangers entered the shop, the first customers in hours. One was short and thick-bodied, a little round stub of a man, and the other, pale and gaunt and elongated, with a bony face all knobs and angles, looked like some predatory creature of the mountains. They wore heavy white tunics with bright orange sashes, a style of dress that was said to be common in the grand cities of the north, and they looked about the store with the quick scornful glances of those accustomed to a far finer level of merchandise.

The short one said, "Are you Inyanna Forlana?"

"I am."

He consulted a document. "Daughter of Forlana Hayorn, who was the daughter of Hayorn Inyanna?"

"You have the right person. May I ask—"

"At last!" cried the tall one. "What a long dreary trail this has been! If you knew how long we've searched for you! Up the river to Khyntor, and then around to Dulorn, and across these damnable mountains—does it ever stop raining down here?—and then from house to house, from shop to shop, all across Velathys, asking this one, asking that one—"

"And I am who you seek?"

"If you can prove your ancestry, yes."

Inyanna shrugged. "I have records. But what business do you have with me?"

"We should introduce ourselves," said the short one. "I am Vezan Ormus and my colleague is called Steyg, and we are officials of the staff of his majesty the Pontifex Tyeveras, Bureau of Probate, Ni-moya." From a richly tooled leather purse Vezan Ormus withdrew a sheaf of documents; he shuffled them purposefully and said, "Your mother's mother's elder sister was a certain Saleen Inyanna, who

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in the twenty-third year of the Pontificate of Kinniken, Lord Ossier being then Coronal, settled in the city of Ni-moya and married one Helmyot Gavoon, third cousin to the Duke."

Inyanna stared blankly. "I know nothing of these people."

"We are not surprised," said Steyg. "It was some generations ago. And doubtless there was little contact between the two branches of the family, considering the great gulf in distance and in wealth."

"My grandmother never mentioned rich relatives in Ni-moya," said Inyanna.

Vezan Ormus coughed and searched in the papers. "Be that as it may. Three children were born to Helmyot Gavoon and Saleen Inyanna, of whom the eldest, a daughter, inherited the family estates. She died young in a hunting mishap; and the lands passed to her only son, Gavoon Dilamayne, who remained childless and died in the fifth year of the Pontificate of Tyeveras, that is to say, nine years ago. Since then the property has remained vacant while the search for legitimate heirs has been conducted. Three years ago it was determined—"

"That I am heir?"

"Indeed," said Steyg blandly, with a broad bony smile.

Inyanna, who had seen the trend of the conversation for quite some time, was nevertheless astounded. Her legs quivered, her lips and mouth went dry, and in her confusion she jerked her arm suddenly, knocking down and shattering an expensive vase of Alhanroel ware. Embarrassed by all that, she got herself under control and said, "What is it I'm supposed to have inherited, then?"

"The grand house known as Nissimorn Prospect, on the northern shore of the Zimr at Ni-moya, and estates at three places in the Steiche Valley, all leased and producing income," said Steyg.

"We congratulate you," said Vezan Ormus.

"And I congratulate you," replied Inyanna, "on the cleverness of your wit. Thank you for these moments of amusement; and now, unless you want to buy something, I beg you let me get on with my bookkeeping, for the taxes are due and—"

"You are skeptical," said Vezan Ormus. "Quite properly. We come with a fantastic story and you are unable to absorb the impact of our words. But look; we are men of Ni-moya. Would we have dragged ourselves thousands of miles down to Velathys for the sake of playing jokes on shopkeepers? See—here." He fanned out his sheaf of papers and pushed them toward Inyanna. Hands trembling, she examined them. A view of the mansion—dazzling—and an array of documents of title, and a genealogy, and a paper bearing the pontifical seal

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with her name inscribed on it—

She looked up, stunned, dazed.

In a faint furry voice she said, "What must I do now?"

"The procedures are purely routine," Steyg replied. "You must file affidavits that you are in fact Inyanna Forlana, you must sign papers agreeing that you will make good the accrued taxes on the properties out of accumulated revenues once you have taken possession, you will have to pay the filing fees for transfer of title, and so on. We can handle all of that for you."

"Filing fees?"

"A matter of a few royals."

Her eyes widened. "Which I can pay out of the estate's accumulated revenues?"

"Unfortunately, no," said Vezan Ormus. "The money must be paid *before* you have taken title, and, of course, you have no access to the revenues of the state until you have taken title, so—"

"An annoying formality," Steyg said. "But a trifling one, if you take the long view."

2.

All told the fees came to twenty royals. That was an enormous sum for Inyanna, nearly her whole savings; but a study of the documents told her that the revenues of the agricultural lands alone were nine hundred royals a year, and then there were the other assets of the estate, the mansion and its contents, the rents and royalties on certain riverfront properties—

Vezan Ormus and Steyg were extremely helpful in the filling out of the forms. She put the *Closed for Business* sign out, not that it mattered much in this slow season, and all afternoon they sat beside her at her little desk upstairs, passing things to her for her to sign, and stamping them with impressive-looking pontifical seals. Afterward she celebrated by taking them down to the tavern at the foot of the hill for a few rounds of wine. Steyg insisted on buying the first, pushing her hand away and plunking down half a crown for a flask of choice palm-wine from Pidruid. Inyanna gasped at the extravagance—she ordinarily drank humbler stuff—but then she remembered that she had come into wealth, and when the flask was gone she ordered another herself. The tavern was crowded, mainly with Hjorts and a few Ghayrogs, and the bureaucrats from the northland looked uncomfortable amid all these nonhumans, sometimes

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holding their fingers thoughtfully over their noses as if to filter out the scent of alien flesh. Inyanna, to put them at their ease, told them again and again how grateful she was that they had taken the trouble to seek her out in the obscurity of Velathys.

"But it is our job!" Vezan Ormus protested. "On this world we each must give service to the Divine by playing our parts in the intricacies of daily life. Land was sitting idle; a great house was unoccupied; a deserving heir lived drably in ignorance. Justice demands that such inequities be righted. To us falls the privilege of doing so."

"All the same," said Inyanna, flushed with wine and leaning almost coquettishly close now to one man, now to the other, "You have undergone great inconvenience for my sake, and I will always be in your debt. May I buy you another flask?"

It was well past dark when they finally left the tavern. Several moons were out, and the mountains that ringed the city, outlying fangs of the great Gonghar range, looked like jagged pillars of black ice in the chilly glimmer. Inyanna saw her visitors to their hostelry, at the edge of Dekkeret Plaza, and in her winy wooziness came close to inviting herself in for the night. But seemingly they had no yearning for that, were perhaps made even a little wary at the possibility, and she found herself smoothly and expertly turned away at the door. Wobbling a little, she made the long steep climb to her house and stepped out on the terrace to take the night air. Her head was throbbing. Too much wine, too much talk, too much startling news! She looked about her at her city, row upon row of small stucco-walled tile-roofed buildings descending the sloping bowl of Velathys Basin, a few ragged strands of parkland, some plazas and mansions, the Duke's ramshackle castle slung along the eastern ridge, the highway like a girdle encircling the town, then the lofty and oppressive mountains beginning just beyond, the marble quarries like raw wounds on their flanks—she could see it all from her hilltop nest. Farewell! Neither an ugly city nor a lovely one, she thought: just a place, quiet, damp, dull, chilly, ordinary, known for its fine marble and its skilled stonemasons and not much else, a provincial town on a provincial continent. She had been resigned to living out her days here. But now, now that miracles had invaded her life, it seemed intolerable to have to spend as much as another hour here, when shining Ni-moya was waiting, Ni-moya, Ni-moya, Ni-moya!

She slept only fitfully. In the morning she met with Vezan Ormus and Steyg in the notary's office behind the bank and turned over to them her little sack of well-worn royal pieces, most of them old,

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some very old, with the faces of Kinniken and Thimin and Ossier on them, and even one coin of the reign of great Confalume, a coin hundreds of years old. In return they gave her a single sheet of paper: a receipt, acknowledging payment of twenty royals that they were to expend on her behalf for filing fees. The other documents, they explained, must go back with them to be countersigned and validated. But they would ship everything to her once the transfer was complete, and then she could come to Ni-moya to take possession of her property.

"You will be my guests," she told them grandly, "for a month of hunting and feasting, when I am in my estates."

"Oh, no," said Vezan Ormus softly. "It would hardly be appropriate for such as we to mingle socially with the mistress of Nissimorn Prospect. But we understand the sentiment, and we thank you for the gesture."

Inyanna asked them to lunch. But they had to move on, Steyg replied. They had other heirs to contact, probate work to carry out in Narabal and Til-omon and Pidruid; many months would pass before they saw their homes and wives in Ni-moya again. And did that mean, she asked, suddenly dismayed, that no action would be taken on the filing of her claim until they had finished their tour? "Not at all," said Steyg. "We will ship your documents to Ni-moya by direct courier tonight. The processing of the claim will begin as soon as possible. You should hear from our office in—oh, shall we say seven to nine weeks?"

She accompanied them to their hotel, and waited outside while they packed, and saw them into their floater, and stood waving in the street as they drove off toward the highway that led to the southwest coast. Then she reopened the shop. In the afternoon there were two customers, one buying eight weights' worth of nails and the other asking for false satin, three yards at sixty weights the yard, so the entire day's sales were less than two crowns, but no matter. Soon she would be rich.

A month went by and no news came from Ni-moya. A second month, and still there was silence.

The patience that had kept Inyanna in Velathys for nineteen years was the patience of hopelessness, of resignation. But now that great changes were before her, she had no patience left. She fidgeted, she paced, she made notations on the calendar. The summer, with its virtually daily rains, came to an end, and the dry crisp autumn began, when the leaves turned fiery in the foothills. No word. The heavy torrents of winter began, with masses of moist air drifting

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south out of the Zimr Valley across the Metamorph lands and colliding with the harsh mountain winds. There was snow in the highest rims of the Gonghars, and streams of mud ran through the streets of Velathys. No word out of Ni-moya, and Inyanna thought of her twenty royals, and terror began to mingle with annoyance in her soul. She celebrated her twentieth birthday alone, bitterly drinking soured wine and imagining what it would be like to command the revenues of Nissimorn Prospect. Why was it taking so long? No doubt Vezan Ormus and Steyg had properly forwarded the documents to the offices of the Pontifex; but just as surely her papers were sitting on some dusty desk, awaiting action, while weeds grew in the gardens of her estate.

On Winterday Eve Inyanna resolved to go to Ni-moya and take charge of the case in person.

The journey was expensive and she had parted with her savings. To raise the money she mortgaged the shop to a family of Hjorts. They gave her ten royals; they were to pay themselves interest by selling off her inventory at their own profit; if the entire debt should be repaid before she returned, they would continue to manage the place on her behalf, paying her a royalty. The contract greatly favored the Hjorts, but Inyanna did not care: she knew, but told no one, that she would never again see the shop, nor these Hjorts, nor Velathys itself, and the only thing that mattered was having the money to go to Ni-moya.

It was no small trip. The most direct route between Velathys and Ni-moya lay across the Shapeshifter province of Piurifayne, and to enter that was dangerous and rash. Instead she had to make an enormous detour, westward through Stiamot Pass, then up the long broad valley that was the Dulorn Rift, with the stupendous mile-high wall of Velathys Scarp rising on the right for hundreds of miles; and once she reached the city of Dulorn itself she would still have half the vast continent of Zimroel to cross, by land and by riverboat, before coming to Ni-moya. But Inyanna saw all that as a glorious gaudy adventure, however long it might take. She had never been anywhere, except once when she was ten, and her mother, enjoying unusual prosperity one winter, had sent her to spend a month in the hotlands south of the Gonghars. Other cities, although she had seen pictures of them, were as remote and implausible to her as other worlds. Her mother once had been to Til-omon on the coast, which she said was a place of brilliant sunlight like golden wine, and soft never-ending summer weather. Her mother's mother had been as far as Narabal, where the tropical air was damp and heavy

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and hung about you like a mantle. But the rest—Pidruid, Piliplok, Dulorn, Ni-moya, and all the others—were only names to her, and the idea of the ocean was almost beyond her imagining, and it was utterly impossible for her really to believe that there was another continent entirely beyond the ocean, with ten great cities for every city of Zimroel, and thousands of millions of people, and a baffling lair beneath the desert called the Labyrinth, where the Pontifex lived, and a mountain thirty miles high, at the summit of which dwelled the Coronal and all his princely court. Thinking about such things gave her a pain in the throat and a ringing in the ears. Awesome and incomprehensible Majipoor was too gigantic a sweetmeat to swallow at a single gulp; but nibbling away at it, a mile at a time, was wholly wondrous to someone who had only once been beyond the boundaries of Velathys.

So Inyanna noted in fascination the change in the air as the big transport floater drifted through the pass and down into the flatlands west of the mountains. It was still winter down there—the days were short, the sunlight pale and greenish—but the breeze was mild and thick, lacking a wintry edge, and there was a sweet pungent fragrance on it. She saw in surprise that the soil here was dense and crumbly and spongy, much unlike the shallow rocky sparkling stuff around her home, and that in places it was an amazing bright red hue for miles and miles. The plants were different—fat-leaved, glistening—and the birds had unfamiliar plumage, and the towns that lined the highway were airy and open, farming villages nothing at all like dark ponderous gray Velathys, with audacious little wooden houses fancifully ornamented with scrollwork and painted in bright splashes of yellow and blue and scarlet. It was terribly unfamiliar, too, not to have the mountains on all sides, for Velathys nestled in the bosom of the Gonghars, but now she was in the wide depressed plateau that lay between the mountains and the far-off coastal strip, and when she looked to the west she could see so far that it was almost frightening, an unbounded vista dropping off into infinity. On her other side she had Velathys Scarp, the outer wall of the mountain chain, but even that was a strangeness, a single solid grim vertical barrier only occasionally divided into individual peaks, that ran endlessly north. But eventually the Scarp gave out, and the land changed profoundly once again as she continued northward into the upper end of the Dulorn Rift. Here the colossal sunken valley was rich in gypsum, and the low rolling hills were white as if with frost. The stone had an eerie texture, spiderweb stuff with a mysterious chilly sheen. In school she had learned that all of the city of Dulorn

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was built of this mineral, and they had shown pictures of it, spires and arches and crystalline facades blazing like cold fire in the light of day. That had seemed mere fable to her, like the tales of Old Earth from which her people were said to have sprung. But one day in late winter Inyanna found herself staring at the outskirts of the actual city of Dulorn and she saw that the fable had been no work of fancy. Dulorn was far more beautiful and strange than she had been able to imagine. It seemed to shine with an inner light of its own, while the sunlight, refracted and shattered and deflected by the myriad angles and facets of the lofty baroque buildings, fell in gleaming showers to the streets.

So this was a city! Beside it, Inyanna thought, Velathys was a bog. She would have stayed here a month, a year, forever, going up one street and down the next, staring at the towers and bridges, peering into the mysterious shops so radiant with costly merchandise, so much unlike her own pitiful little place. These hordes of snaky-faced people—this was a Ghayrog city, millions of the quasi-reptilian aliens and just a scattering of the other races—moving with such purposefulness, pursuing professions unknown to simple mountain folk—the luminous posters advertising Dulorn's famous Perpetual Circus—the elegant restaurants and hotels and parks—all of it left Inyanna numb with awe. Surely there was nothing on Majipoor to compare with this place! Yet they said Ni-moya was far greater, and Stee on Castle Mount superior to them both, and then also the famous Piliplok, and the port of Alaisor, and—so much, so much!

But half a day was all she had in Dulorn, while the floater was discharging its passengers and being readied for the next leg of its route. That was like no time at all. A day later, as she journeyed eastward through the forests between Dulorn and Mazadone, she found herself not sure whether she had truly seen Dulorn or only dreamed that she had been there.

New wonders presented themselves daily—places where the air was purple, trees the size of hills, thickets of ferns that sang. Then came long stretches of dull indistinguishable cities, Cynthion, Mazadone, Thagobar, and many more. Aboard the floater passengers came and went, drivers were changed every nine hundred miles or so, and only Inyanna went on and on and on, country girl off seeing the world, getting glassy-eyed now and foggy-brained from the endlessly unrolling vista. There were geysers to be seen shortly, and hot lakes, and other thermal wonders: Khyntor, this was, the big city of the midlands, where she was to board the riverboat for Ni-

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moya. Here the River Zimr came down out of the northwest, a river as big as a sea, so that it strained the eyes to look from bank to bank. In Velathys, Inyanna had known only mountain streams, quick and narrow. They gave her no preparation for the huge curving monster of dark water that was the Zimr.

On the breast of that monster Inyanna now sailed for weeks, past Verf and Stroyn and Lagomandino and fifty other cities whose names were mere noises to her. The riverboat became the whole of her world. In the valley of the Zimr seasons were gentle and it was easy to lose track of the passing of time. It seemed to be springtime, though she knew it must be summer, and late summer at that, for she had been embarked on this journey more than half a year. Perhaps it would never end: perhaps it was her fate merely to drift from place to place, experiencing nothing, coming to ground nowhere. That was all right. She had begun to forget herself. Somewhere there was a shop that had been hers, somewhere there was a great estate that would be hers, somewhere there was a young woman named Inyanna Forlana who came from Velathys, but all that had dissolved into mere motion as she floated onward across unending Majipoor.

Then one day for the hundredth time some new city began to come in view along the Zimr's shores, and there was sudden stirring aboard the boat, a rushing to the rails to stare into the misty distance. Inyanna heard them muttering, "Ni-moya! Ni-moya!" and knew that her voyage had reached its end, that her wandering was over, that she was coming into her true home and birthright.

3.

She was wise enough to know that to try to fathom Ni-moya on the first day made no more sense than trying to count the stars. It was a metropolis twenty times the size of Velathys, sprawling for hundreds of miles along both banks of the immense Zimr, and she sensed that one could spend a lifetime here and still need a map to find one's way around. Very well. She refused to let herself be awed or overwhelmed by the grotesque excessiveness of everything she saw about her here. She would conquer this city step by single step. In that calm decision was the beginning of her transformation into a true Ni-moyan.

Nevertheless there was still the first step to be taken. The riverboat had docked at what seemed to be the southern bank of the

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Zimr. Clutching her one small satchel, Inyanna stared out over a vast body of water—the Zimr here was swollen by its meeting with several major tributaries—and saw cities on every shore. Which one was Ni-moya? Where would the pontifical offices be? How would she find her lands and mansion? Glowing signs directed her to ferries, but their destinations were places called Gimbeluc and Istmoy and Strelain and Strand Vista: suburbs, she guessed. There was no sign for a ferry to Ni-moya because *all* these places were Ni-moya.

"Are you lost?" a thin sharp voice said.

Inyanna turned and saw a girl who had been on the riverboat, two or three years younger than herself, with a smudged face and stringy hair bizarrely dyed lavender. Too proud or perhaps too shy to accept help from her—Inyanna was not sure which—she shook her head brusquely and glanced away, feeling her cheeks go hot and red.

The girl said, "There's a public directory back of the ticket windows," and vanished into the ferry-bound hordes.

Inyanna joined the line outside the directory, came at last to the communion booth, and poked her head into the yielding contact hood. "Directory," a voice said.

Inyanna replied smoothly, "Office of the Pontifex. Bureau of Probate."

"There is no listing for such a bureau."

Inyanna frowned. "Ofice of the Pontifex, then."

"853 Rodamaunt Promenade, Strelain."

Vaguely troubled, she bought a ferry ticket to Strelain: one crown twenty weights. That left her with exactly two royals, perhaps enough for a few weeks' expenses in this costly place. After that? I am the inheritor of Nissimorn Prospect, she told herself airily, and boarded the ferry. But she wondered why the Bureau of Probate's address was unlisted.

It was mid-afternoon. The ferry, with a blast of its horn, glided serenely out from its slip. Inyanna clung to the rail, peering in wonder at the city on the far shore, every building a radiant white tower, flat-roofed, rising in level upon level toward the ridge of gentle green hills to the north. A map was mounted on a post near the stairway to the lower decks. Strelain, she saw, was the central district of the city, just opposite the ferry depot, which was named Nissimorn. The men from the Pontifex had told her that her estate was on the northern shore; therefore, since it was called Nissimorn Prospect and must face Nissimorn, it should be in Strelain itself, perhaps somewhere in that forested stretch of the shore to the northeast. Gimbeluc was a western suburb, separated from Strelain by

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a many-bridged subsidiary river; Istmoy was to the east; up from the south came the River Steiche, nearly as great as the Zimr itself, and the towns along its bank were named—

"Your first time?" It was the lavender-haired girl again.

Inyanna smiled nervously. "Yes. I'm from Velathys. Country girl, I guess."

"You seem afraid of me."

"Am I? Do I?"

"I won't bite you. I won't even swindle you. My name's Liloyve. I'm a thief in the Grand Bazaar."

"Did you say thief?"

"It's a recognized profession in Ni-moya. They don't license us yet, but they don't interfere much with us, either, and we have our own official registry, like a regular guild. I've been down in Lagomandino, selling stolen goods for my uncle. Are you too good for me, or just very timid?"

"Neither," said Inyanna. "But I've come a long way alone, and I'm out of the habit of talking to people, I think." She forced another smile. "You're really a thief?"

"Yes. But not a pickpocket. You look so worried! What's your name, anyway?"

"Inyanna Forlana."

"I like the sound of that. I've never met an Inyanna before. You've traveled all the way from Velathys to Ni-moya? What for?"

"To claim my inheritance," Inyanna answered. "The property of my grandmother's sister's grandson. An estate known as Nissimorn Prospect, on the north shore of—"

Liloyve giggled. She tried to smother it, and her cheeks belled out, and she coughed and clapped a hand over her mouth in what was almost a convulsion of mirth. But it passed swiftly and her expression changed to a softer one of pity. Gently she said, "Then you must be of the family of the Duke, and I should beg your pardon for approaching you so rudely here."

"The family of the Duke? No, of course not. Why do you—"

"Nissimorn Prospect is the estate of Calain, who is the Duke's younger brother."

Inyanna shook her head. "No. My grandmother's sister's—"

"Poor thing, no need to pick your pocket. Someone's done it already!"

Inyanna clutched at her satchel.

"No," Liloyve said. "I mean, you've been taken, if you think you've inherited Nissimorn Prospect."

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"There were papers with the pontifical seal. Two men of Ni-moya brought them in person to Velathys. I may be a country girl, but I'm not so great a fool as to make this journey without proof. I had my suspicions, yes, but I saw the documents. I've filed for title! Twenty royals, it cost, but the papers were in order!"

Liloyve said, "Where will you stay, when we reach Strelain?"

"I've given that no thought. An inn, I suppose."

"Save your crowns. You'll need them. We'll put you up with us in the Bazaar. And in the morning you can take things up with the imperial proctors. Maybe they can help you recover some of what you've lost, eh?"

4.

That she had been the victim of swindlers had been in Inyanna's mind from the start, like a low nagging buzz droning beneath lovely music, but she had chosen not to hear that buzz, and even now, with the buzz grown to a monstrous roar, she compelled herself to remain confident. This scruffy little bazaar-girl, this self-admitted professional thief, doubtless had the keenly honed mistrustfulness of one who lived by her wits on a hostile universe, and saw fraud and malevolence on all sides, possibly even where none existed. Inyanna was aware that she might have led herself through gullibility into a terrible error, but it was pointless to lament so soon. Perhaps she *was* somehow of the Duke's family after all, or perhaps Liloyve was confused about the ownership of Nissimorn Prospect; or, if in fact she had come to Ni-moya on a fool's chase, consuming her last few crowns in the fruitless journey, at least now she was in Ni-moya rather than Velathys, and that in itself was cause for cheer.

As the ferry pulled into the Strelain slip Inyanna had her first view of central Ni-moya at close range. Towers of dazzling white came down almost to the water's edge, rising so steeply and suddenly that they seemed unstable, and it was hard to understand why they did not topple into the river. Night was beginning to fall. Lights glittered everywhere. Inyanna maintained the calmness of a sleepwalker in the face of the city's splendors. I have come home, she told herself over and over. I am home, this city is my home, I feel quite at home here. All the same she took care to stay close beside Liloyve as they made their way through swarming mobs of commuters, up the passageway to the street.

At the gate of the terminal stood three huge metallic birds with

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jeweled eyes—a gihorna with vast wings outspread, a great silly long-legged hazenmarl, and some third one that Inyanna did not know, with an enormous pouched beak curved like a sickle. The mechanical figures moved slowly, craning their heads, fluffing their wings. "Emblems of the city," Liloyve said. "You'll see them everywhere, the big silly boobies! A fortune in precious jewels in their eyes, too."

"And no one steals them?"

"I wish I had the nerve. I'd climb right up there and snatch them out. But it's a thousand years' bad luck, so they say. The Metamorphs will rise again and cast us out, and the towers will fall, and a lot of other nonsense."

"But if you don't believe the legends, why don't you steal the gems?"

Liloyve laughed her snorting little laugh. "Who'd buy them? Any dealer would know what they were, and with a curse on them there'd be no takers, and a world of trouble for the thief, and the King of Dreams whining in your head until you wanted to scream. I'd rather have a pocket full of colored glass than the eyes of the birds of Nimoya. Here, get in!" She opened the door of a small street-floater parked outside the terminal and shoved Inyanna to a seat. Settling in beside her, Liloyve briskly tapped out a code on the floater's pay-plate and the little vehicle took off. "We can thank your noble kinsman for this ride," she said.

"What? Who?"

"Calain, the Duke's brother. I used his pay-code. It was stolen last month and a lot of us are riding free, courtesy of Calain. Of course, when the bills come in his chancellor will get the number changed, but until then—you see?"

"I am very naive," said Inyanna. "I still believe that the Lady and the King see our sins while we sleep, and send dreams to discourage such things."

"So you are meant to believe," Liloyve replied. "Kill a man and you'll hear from the King of Dreams, no question of it. But there are how many people on Majipoor? Eighteen billion? Thirty? Fifty? And the King has time to foul the dreams of everyone who steals a ride in a street-floater? Do you think so?"

"Well—"

"Or even those who falsely sell title to other people's palaces?"

Inyanna's cheeks flamed and she turned away.

"Where are we going now?" she asked in a muffled voice.

"We're already there. The Grand Bazaar. Out!"

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Inyanna followed Liloyve into a broad plaza bordered on three sides by lofty towers and on the fourth by a low, squat-looking building fronted by a multitude of shallow-rising stone steps. Hundreds of people in elegant white Ni-moyan tunics, perhaps thousands, were rushing in and out of the building's wide mouth, over the arch of which the three emblematic birds were carved in high relief, with jewels again in their eyes.

Liloyve said, "This is Pidruid Gate, one of thirteen entrances. The Bazaar itself covers fifteen square miles, you know—a little like the Labyrinth, though it isn't as far underground, just at street level mainly, snaking all over the city, through the other buildings, under some of the streets, between buildings—a city within a city, you might say. My people have lived in it for hundreds of years. Hereditary thieves, we are. Without us the shopkeepers would be in bad trouble."

"I was a shopkeeper in Velathys. We have no thieves there, and I think we never felt the need for any," said Inyanna drily as they allowed themselves to be swept along up the shallow steps and into the gate of the Grand Bazaar.

"It's different here," said Liloyve.

The Bazaar spread in every direction—a maze of narrow arcades and passages and tunnels and galleries, brightly lit, divided and subdivided into an infinity of tiny stalls. Overhead, a single continuous skein of yellow sparklecloth stretched into the distance, casting a brilliant glow from its own internal luminescence. That one sight astounded Inyanna more than anything else she had seen so far in Ni-moya, for she had sometimes carried sparklecloth in her shop, at three royals the roll, and such a roll was good for decorating no more than a small room; her soul quailed at the thought of fifteen square miles of sparklecloth, and her mind, canny as it was in such matters, could not at all calculate the cost. Ni-moya! Such excess could be met only with the defense of laughter.

They proceeded inward. One little streetlet seemed just like the next, every one bustling with shops for porcelains and fabrics and tableware and clothes, for fruits and meats and vegetables and delicacies, each with a wine-shop and a spice-shop and a gallery of precious stones, and a vendor selling grilled sausages and one selling fried fish, and the like. Yet Liloyve seemed to know precisely which fork and channel to take, which of the innumerable identical alleys led toward her destination, for she moved purposefully and swiftly, pausing only occasionally to acquire their dinner by deftly snatching a stick of fish from one counter or a globelet of wine from another.

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Several times the vendor saw her make the theft, and only smiled.

Mystified, Inyanna said, "They don't mind?"

"They know me. But I tell you, we thieves are highly regarded here. We are a necessity."

"I wish I understood that."

"We maintain order in the Bazaar, do you see? No one steals here but us, and we take only what we need, and we patrol the place against amateurs. How would it be, in these mobs, if each customer out of ten filled his purse with merchandise? But we move among them, filling our own purses, and also halting *them*. We are a known quantity. Do you see? Our own takings are a kind of tax on the merchants, a salary of sorts that they pay us, to regulate the others who throng the passages. *Here, now!*" Those last words were directed not to Inyanna but to a boy of about twelve, dark-haired and eel-slim, who had been rummaging through hunting knives in an open bin. With a swift swoop Liloyve caught the boy's hand and in the same motion seized hold of the writhing tentacles of a Vroon no taller than the boy, standing a few feet away in the shadows. Inyanna heard Liloyve speaking in low, fierce tones, but could not make out a single word; the encounter was over in moments, and the Vroon and the boy slunk miserably away.

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"What happened then?" Inyanna asked.

"They were stealing knives, the boy passing them to the Vroon. I told them to get out of the Bazaar right away, or my brothers would cut the Vroon's wrigglers off and feed them to the boy roasted in stinnim-oil."

"Would such a thing be done?"

"Of course not. It would be worth a life of sour dreams to anyone who did it. But they got the point. Only authorized thieves steal in this place. You see? We are the proctors here, in a way of speaking. We are indispensable. And here—this is where I live. You are my guest."

5.

Liloyve lived underground, in a room of whitewashed stone that was one of a chain of seven or eight such rooms beneath a section of the Grand Bazaar devoted to merchants of cheeses and oils. A trapdoor and a suspended ladder of rope led to the subterranean chambers; and the moment Inyanna began the downward climb, all the noise and frenzy of the Bazaar became impossible to perceive, and the only reminder of what lay above was the faint but unarguable odor of red Stoienzar cheese that penetrated even the stone walls.

"Our den," Liloyve said. She sang a quick lilting melody and people came trailing in from the far rooms—shabby, shifty people, mostly small and thin, with a look about them much the same as Liloyve's, as of having been manufactured from second-rate materials. "My brothers Sidoun and Hanoun," she said. "My sister Medill Faryun. My cousins Avayne, Amayne, and Athayne. And this is my uncle Agourmole, who heads our clan. Uncle, this is Inyanna Forlana, from Velathys, who was sold Nissimorn Prospect for twenty royals by two traveling rogues. I met her on the riverboat. She'll live with us and become a thief."

Inyanna gasped. "I—"

Agourmole, courtly and elaborately formal, made a gesture of the Lady, by way of blessing. "You are one of us. Can you wear a man's clothing?"

Bewildered, Inyanna said, "Yes, I imagine so, but I don't under—"

"I have a younger brother who is registered with our guild. He lives in Avendroyne among the Shapeshifters, and has not been seen in Ni-moya for years. You will take his name and place. It is simpler

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that way than gaining a new registration. Give me your hand." She let him take it. His palms were moist and soft. He looked up into her eyes and said in a low intense tone, "Your true life is just commencing. All that has gone before has been only a dream. Now you are a thief in Ni-moya and your name is Kulibhai." Winking, he added, "Twenty royals is an excellent price for Nissimorn Prospect."

"Those were only the filing fees," said Inyanna. "They told me I had inherited it, through my mother's mother's sister."

"If it is true, you must hold a grand feast for us there, once you are in possession, to repay our hospitality. Agreed?" Agourmole laughed. "Avayne! Wine for your Uncle Kulibhai! Sidoun, Hanoun, find clothes for him! Music, someone! Who's for a dance? Show some life! Medill, prepare the guest bed!" The little man pranced about irrepressibly, barking orders. Inyanna, swept along by his vehement energies, accepted a cup of wine, allowed herself to be measured for a tunic by one of Liloyve's brothers, struggled to commit to memory the flood of names that had swept across her mind. Others now were coming into the room, more humans, three pudgy-cheeked gray-faced Hjorts, and, to Inyanna's amazement, a pair of slender silent Metamorphs. Accustomed though she was to dealing with Shape-shifters in her shopkeeping days, she had not expected to find Liloyve and her family actually sharing their quarters with these mysterious aborigines. But perhaps thieves, like Metamorphs, deemed themselves a race apart on Majipoor, and the two were drawn readily to one another.

An impromptu party buzzed about her for hours. The thieves seemed to be vying for her favor, each in turn cozying up to her, offering some little trinket, some intimate tale, some bit of confidential gossip. To the child of a long line of shopkeepers, thieves were natural enemies; and yet these people, seedy outcasts though they might be, seemed warm and friendly and open, and they were her only allies against a vast and indifferent city. Inyanna had no wish to take up their profession, but she knew that fortune might have done worse by her than to throw her in with Liloyve's folk.

She slept fitfully, dreaming vaporous fragmentary dreams and several times waking in total confusion, with no idea where she was. Eventually exhaustion seized her and she dropped into deep slumber. Usually it was dawn that woke her, but dawn was a stranger in this cave of a place, and when she awakened it might have been any time of day or night.

Liloyve smiled at her. "You must have been terribly tired."

"Did I sleep too long?"

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"You slept until you were finished sleeping. That must have been the right amount, eh?"

Inyanna looked around. She saw traces of the party—flasks, empty globelets, stray items of clothing—but the others were gone. Off on their morning rounds, Liloyve explained. She showed Inyanna where to wash and dress, and then they went up into the maelstrom of the Bazaar. By day it was as busy as it had been the night before, but somehow it looked less magical in ordinary light, its texture less dense, its atmosphere less charged with electricity: it was no more than a vast crowded emporium, where last night it had seemed to Inyanna an enigmatic self-contained universe. They paused only to steal their breakfasts at three or four counters, Liloyve brazenly helping herself and passing the take to an abashed and hesitant Inyanna, and then—making their way through the impossible intricacy of the maze, which Inyanna was sure she would never master—they emerged abruptly into the clear fresh air of the surface world.

"We have come out at Piliplok Gate," said Liloyve. "From here it's only a short walk to the Pontificate."

A short walk but a stunning one, for around every corner lay new wonders. Up one splendid boulevard Inyanna caught sight of a brilliant stream of radiance, like a second sun sprouting from the pavement. This, said Liloyve, was the beginning of the Crystal Boulevard, that blazed by day and by night with the glint of revolving reflectors. Across another street and she had a view of what could only be the palace of the Duke of Ni-moya, far to the east down the great slope of the city, at the place where the Zimr made its sudden bend. It was a slender shaft of glassy stone atop a broad many-columned base, huge even at this enormous distance, and surrounded by a park that was like a carpet of green. One more turn and Inyanna beheld something that resembled the loosely woven chrysalis of some fabulous insect, but a mile in length, hanging suspended above an immensely wide avenue. "The Gossamer Galleria," said Liloyve, "where the rich ones buy their playthings. Perhaps some day you'll scatter your royals in its shops. But not today. Here we are: Rodamaunt Promenade. We'll see soon enough about your inheritance."

The street was a grand curving one lined on one side by flat-faced towers all the same height, and on the other by an alternation of great buildings and short ones. These, apparently, were government offices. Inyanna was daunted by the complexity of it all, and might have wandered outside in confusion for hours, not daring to enter; but Liloyve penetrated the mysteries of the place with a series of

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quick inquiries and led Inyanna within, through the corridors and windings of a maze hardly less intricate than the Grand Bazaar itself, until at length they found themselves sitting on a wooden bench in a large and brightly-lit waiting room, watching names flick on and off on a bulletin board overhead. In half an hour Inyanna's appeared on the board.

"Is this the Bureau of Probate?" she asked, as they went in.

"Apparently there's no such thing," said Liloyve. "These are the proctors. If anyone can help you, they can."

A dour-faced Hjort, bloated and goggle-eyed like most of his kind, asked for her problem, and Inyanna, hesitant at first, then voluble, poured out the story: the strangers from Ni-moya, the astounding tale of the grand inheritance, the documents, the pontifical seal, the twenty royals in filing fees. The Hjort, as the story unfolded, slumped behind his desk, kneaded his jowls, disconcertingly swiveled his great globular eyes one at a time. When she was done he took her receipt from her, ran his thick fingers thoughtfully over the ridges of the imperial seal it bore, and said gloomily, "You are the nineteenth claimant to Nissimorn Prospect who has presented herself in Ni-moya this year. There will be more, I am afraid. There will be many more."

"Nineteenth?"

"To my knowledge. Others may not have bothered to report the fraud to the proctors."

"The fraud," Inyanna repeated. "Is that it? The documents they showed me, the genealogy, the papers with my name on it—they traveled all the way from Ni-moya to Velathys simply to swindle me of twenty royals?"

"Oh, not simply to swindle *you,*" said the Hjort. "Probably there are three or four heirs to Nissimorn Prospect in Velathys, and five in Narabal, and seven in Til-omon, and a dozen in Pidruid—it's not hard to get genealogies, you know. And forge the documents, and fill in the blanks. Twenty royals from this one, thirty perhaps from that, a nice livelihood if you keep moving, you see?"

"But how is this possible? Such things are against the law!"

"Yes," the Hjort agreed wearily.

"And the King of Dreams—"

"Will punish them severely, you may be sure of it. Nor will we fail to apply civil penalties once we apprehend them. You will give us great assistance by describing them to us."

"And my twenty royals?"

The Hjort shrugged.

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Inyanna said, "There's no hope that I can recover a thing?"

"None."

"But I've lost everything, then!"

"On behalf of His Majesty I offer my most sincere regrets," said the Hjort, and that was that.

Outside, Inyanna said sharply to Liloyve, "Take me to Nissimorn Prospect!"

"But surely you don't believe—"

"That it is really mine? No, of course not. But I want to see it! I want to know what sort of place it was that was sold to me for my twenty royals!"

"Why torment yourself?"

"Please," Inyanna said.

"Come, then," said Liloyve.

She hailed a floater and gave it its instructions. Wide-eyed, Inyanna stared in wonder as the little vehicle bore them through the noble avenues of Ni-moya. In the warmth of the midday sun everything seemed bathed with light, and the city glowed, not with the frosty light of crystalline Dulorn but with a pulsing, throbbing, sensuous splendor that reverberated from every white-washed wall and street. Liloyve described the most significant of the places they were passing. "This is the Museum of Worlds," she said, indicating a great structure crowned by a tiara of angular glass domes. "Treasures of a thousand planets, even some things of Old Earth. And this is the Chamber of Sorcery, also a museum of sorts, given over to magic and dreaming. I have never been in it. And there—see the three birds of the city out front?—is the City Palace, where the mayor lives." They turned downhill, toward the river. "The floating restaurants are in this part of the harbor," she said, with a grand wave of her hand. "Nine of them, like little islands. They say you can have dishes from every province of Majipoor there. Someday we'll eat at them, all nine, eh?"

Inyanna smiled sadly. "It would be nice to think so."

"Don't worry. We have all our lives before us, and a thief's life is a comfortable one. I mean to roam every street of Ni-moya in my time, and you can come with me. There's a Park of Fabulous Beasts out in Gimbeluc, off in the hills, you know, with creatures that are extinct in the wilds everywhere, sigimoins and ghalvars and dimilions and everything, and there's the Opera House, where the municipal orchestra plays—you know about our orchestra? A thousand instruments, nothing like it in the universe—and then there's—oh. Here we are!"

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They dismounted from the floater. Inyanna saw that they were nearly at the river's edge. Before her lay the Zimr, the great river so wide at this point that she could barely see across it, and only dimly could she make out the green line of Nissimorn on the horizon. Just to her left was a palisade of metal spikes twice the height of a man, set eight or ten feet apart and linked by a gauzy, almost invisible webbing that gave off a deep and sinister humming sound. Within that fence was a garden of striking beauty, low elegant shrubs abloom with gold and turquoise and scarlet blossoms, and a lawn so closely cropped it might well have been sprayed against the ground. Farther beyond, the land began to rise, and the house itself sat upon a rocky prominence overlooking the harbor: a mansion of wonderful size, white-walled in the Ni-moya manner, which made much use of the techniques of suspension and lightness typical of Ni-moyan architecture, with porticos that seemed to float and balconies cantilevered out for wondrous distances. Short of the Ducal Palace itself—visible not far down the shore, rising magnificently on its pedestal—Nissimorn Prospect seemed to Inyanna to be the most beautiful single building she had seen in all of Ni-moya thus far. And it was this that she thought she had inherited! She began to laugh. She sprinted along the palisade, pausing now and again to contemplate the great house from various angles, and laughter poured from her as though someone had told her the deepest truth of the universe, the truth that holds the secrets of all other truths and so must necessarily evoke a torrent of laughter. Liloyve followed her, calling out for her to wait, but Inyanna ran as one possessed. Finally she came to the front gate, where two mammoth Skandars in immaculate white livery stood guard, all their arms folded in an emphatic possessive way. Inyanna continued to laugh; the Skandars scowled; Liloyve, coming up behind, plucked at Inyanna's sleeve and urged her to leave before there was trouble.

"Wait," she said, gasping. She went up to the Skandars. "Are you servants of Calain of Ni-moya?"

They looked at her without seeing her, and said nothing.

"Tell your master," she went on, undisturbed, "that Inyanna of Velathys was here, to see the house, and sends her regrets that she could not come to dine. Thank you."

"Come!" Liloyve whispered urgently.

Anger was beginning to replace indifference on the hairy faces of the huge guards. Inyanna saluted them graciously, and broke into laughter again, and gestured to Liloyve; and together they ran back to the floater, Liloyve too finally joining in the uncontrollable mirth.

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6.

It was a long time before Inyanna saw the sunlight of Ni-moya again, for now she took up her new life as a thief in the depths of the Grand Bazaar. At first she had no intent of adopting the profession of Liloyve and her family. But practical considerations soon overruled her niceties of morality. She had no way of returning to Velathys, nor, after these first few glimpses of Ni-moya, had she any real wish to do so. Nothing waited for her there except a life of peddling glue and nails and false satin and lanterns from Til-omon. To stay in Ni-moya, though, required a livelihood. She knew no trade except shopkeeping, and without capital she could hardly open a shop here. Quite soon all her money would be exhausted; she would not live off the charity of her new friends; she had no other prospects; they were offering her a niche in their society; and somehow it seemed acceptable to take up a life of thieving, alien though that was to her former nature, now that she had been robbed of all her savings by the fast-talking swindlers. So she let herself be garbed in a man's tunic—she was tall enough, and a little awkward of bearing, enough to carry the deception off plausibly—and under the name of Kulibhai, brother to the master thief Agourmole, entered the guild of thieves.

Liloyve was her mentor. For three days Inyanna followed her through the Bazaar, watching closely as the lavender-haired girl skimmed merchandise here and there. Some of it was done as crudely as donning a cloak in a shop and vanishing suddenly into the crowds; some involved quick sleight-of-hand in the bins and counters; and some required elaborate deceptions, bamboozling some delivery boy with a promise of kisses or better, while an accomplice made off with his barrow of goods. At the same time there was the obligation to prevent freelance theft. Twice in the three days, Inyanna saw Liloyve do that—the hand on the wrist, the cold angry glare, the sharp whispered words, resulting both times in the look of fear, the apologies, the hasty withdrawal. Inyanna wondered if she would ever have the courage to do that. It seemed harder than thieving itself; and she was not at all sure she could bring herself to steal, either.

On the fourth day Liloyve said, "Bring me a flask of dragon-milk and two of the golden wine of Piliplok."

Inyanna said, appalled, "But they must sell for a royal apiece!"

"Indeed."

"Let me begin by stealing sausages."

"It's no harder to steal rare wines," said Liloyve. "And consider-

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ably more profitable."

"I am not ready."

"You only think you aren't. You've seen how it's done. You can do it yourself. Your fears are needless. You have the soul of a thief, Inyanna."

Furiously Inyanna said, "How can you say such a—"

"Softly, softly, I meant it as a compliment!"

Inyanna nodded. "Even so. I think you are wrong."

"I think you underestimate yourself," said Liloyve. "There are aspects of your character more apparent to others than to yourself. I saw them displayed the day we visited Nissimorn Prospect. Go, now: steal me a flask of Piliplok golden, and one of dragon-milk, and no more chatter. If you are ever to be a thief of our guild, today is your beginning."

There was no avoiding it. But there was no reason to risk doing it alone. Inyanna asked Liloyve's cousin Athayne to accompany her, and together they went swaggering down to a wineshop in Ossier Lane—two young bucks of Ni-moya off to buy themselves some jollity. A strange calmness came over Inyanna. She allowed herself to think of no irrelevancies, such as morality, property rights, or the fear of punishment; there was only the task at hand to consider, a routine job of thievery. Once her profession had been shopkeeping, and now it was shoplooting, and it was useless to complicate the situation with philosophical hesitations.

A Ghayrog was behind the wineshop counter: icy eyes that never blinked, glossy scaly skin, writhing fleshy hair. Inyanna, making her voice as deep as she could, inquired after the price of dragon-milk in globelet, flask, and duple. Meanwhile Athayne busied himself among the cheap red mid-country wines. The Ghayrog quoted prices. Inyanna expressed shock. The Ghayrog shrugged. Inyanna held one flask aloft, studied the pale blue fluid, scowled, and said, "It is murkier than the usual quality."

"It varies from year to year. And from dragon to dragon."

"One would think these things would be made standard."

"The effect is standard," said the Ghayrog, with the chilly reptilian Ghayrog equivalent of a leer and a smirk. "A few sips of that, my fellow, and you'll be good for the whole night!"

"Let me think about it a moment," said Inyanna. "A royal's no little sum, no matter how wonderful the effects."

It was the signal to Athayne, who turned and said, "This Mazadone stuff, is it really three crowns the duple? I'm certain that last week it sold for two."

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"If you can find it at two, buy it at two," the Ghayrog answered.

Athayne scowled, moved as if to put the bottle back on the shelf, lurched and stumbled, and knocked half a row of globelets over. The Ghayrog hissed in anger. Athayne, bellowing his regrets, clumsily tried to set things to rights, knocking still more bottles down. The Ghayrog scurried to the display, yelling. He and Athayne bumbled into one another in their attempts to restore order, and in that moment Inyanna popped the flask of dragon-milk into her tunic, tucked one of Piliplok golden beside it, and, saying loudly, "I'll check the prices elsewhere, I think," walked out of the shop. That was all there was to it. She forced herself not to break into a run, although her cheeks were blazing and she was certain that the passersby all knew her for a thief, and that the other shopkeepers in the row would come storming out to seize her, and that the Ghayrog himself would be after her in a moment. But without difficulty she made her way to the corner, turned to her left, saw the street of facepaints and perfumes, went the length of it, and entered the place of oils and cheeses where Liloyve was waiting.

"Take these," Inyanna said. "They burn holes in my breast."

"Well done," Liloyve told her. "We'll drink the golden tonight, in your honor!"

"And the dragon-milk?"

"Keep it," said Liloyve. "Share it with Calain, the night you are invited to dine at Nissimorn Prospect."

That night Inyanna lay awake for hours, afraid to sleep, for sleep brought dreams and in dreams came punishments. The wine was gone, but the dragon-milk flask lay beneath her pillow, and she felt the urge to slip off in the night and return it to the Ghayrog. Centuries of shopkeeper ancestors weighed against her soul. A thief, she thought, a thief, a thief, I have become a thief in Ni-moya. By what right did I take those things? By what right, she answered herself, did those two steal my twenty royals? But what had that to do with the Ghayrog? If *they* steal from me, and I use that as license to steal from *him,* and he goes to another's goods, where does it end, how does society survive? The Lady forgive me, she thought. The King of Dreams will whip my spirit. But at last she slept; she could not keep from sleeping forever; and the dreams that came to her were dreams of wonder and majesty, as she glided disembodied through the grand avenues of the city, past the Crystal Boulevard, the Museum of Worlds, the Gossamer Galleria, to Nissimorn Prospect, where the Duke's brother took her hand. The dream bewildered her, for she could not in any way see it as a dream of punishment.

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Where was morality? Where was proper conduct? This went counter to all she believed. Yet it was as though destiny had intended her to be a thief. Everything that had happened to her in the past year had aimed her toward that. So perhaps it was the Will of the Divine that she become what she had become. Inyanna smiled at that. What cynicism! But so be it. She would not fight destiny.

7.

She stole often and she stole well. That first tentative terrifying venture into thievery was followed by many more over the days that followed. She roved freely through the Grand Bazaar, sometimes with accomplices, sometimes alone, helping herself to this and that and this and that. It was so easy that it came to seem almost not like crime. The Bazaar was always crowded: Ni-moya's population, they said, was close to thirty million, and it seemed that all of them were in the Bazaar all the time. There was a constant crushing flow of people. The merchants were harried and careless, bedeviled always by questions, disputes, bargainers, inspectors. There was little challenge in moving through the river of beings, taking as she pleased.

Most of the booty was sold. A professional thief might keep the occasional item for her own use, and meals were always taken on the job, but nearly everything was stolen with an eye toward immediate resale. That was mainly the responsibility of the Hjorts who lived with Agourmole's family. There were three of them, Beyork, Hankh, and Mozinhunt, and they were part of a wide-ranging network of disposers of stolen goods, a chain of Hjorts that passed merchandise briskly out of the bazaar and into wholesale channels that often eventually resold it to the merchants from whom it had been taken. Inyanna learned quickly what things were in demand by these people and what were not to be bothered with.

Because Inyanna was new to Ni-moya she had a particularly easy time of it. Not all the merchants of the Grand Bazaar were complacent about the guild of thieves, and some knew Liloyve and Athayne and Sidoun and the others of the family by sight, ordering them out of their shops the moment they appeared. But the young man who called himself Kulibhai was unknown in the Bazaar, and so long as Inyanna picked over a different section of the all but infinite place every day, it would be many years before her victims became familiar with her.

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The dangers in her work came not so much from the shopkeepers, though, as from thieves of other families. They did not know her either, and their eyes were quicker than the merchants'—so that three times in her first ten days Inyanna was apprehended by some other thief. It was terrifying at first to feel a hand closing on her wrist; but she remained cool; and, confronting the other without panic, she said simply, "You are infringing. I am Kulibhai, brother to Agourmole." Word spread swiftly. After the third such event, she was not troubled again.

To make such arrests herself was troublesome. At first she had no way of telling the legitimate thieves from the improper ones, and she hesitated to seize the wrist of some who, for all she knew, had been pilfering in the Bazaar since Lord Kinniken's time. It became surprisingly easy for her to detect thievery in progress; but if she had no other thief of Agourmole's clan with her to consult, she took no action. Gradually she came to recognize many of the licensed thieves of other families, but yet nearly every day she saw some unfamiliar figure rummaging through a merchant's goods, and finally, after some weeks in the Bazaar, she felt moved to act. If she found herself apprehending a true thief, she could always beg pardon; but the essence of the system was that she not only stole but also policed, and she knew she was failing in that duty. Her first arrest was that of a grimy girl taking vegetables; there was hardly time to say a word, for the girl dropped her take and fled in terror. The next one turned out to be a veteran thief distantly related to Agourmole, who amiably explained Inyanna's mistake; and the third, unauthorized but also unfrightened, responded to Inyanna's words with spitting curses and muttered threats, to which Inyanna replied calmly and untruthfully that seven other thieves of the guild were observing them and would take immediate action in the event of trouble. After that she felt no qualms, and acted freely and confidently whenever she believed it was appropriate.

Nor did the thieving itself trouble her conscience, after the beginning. She had been reared to expect the vengeance of the King of Dreams if she wandered into sin—nightmares, torments, a fever of the soul whenever she closed her eyes—but either the King did not regard this sort of pilferage and purloinment as sin, or else he and his minions were so busy with even greater criminals that they had no time to get around to her. Whatever the reason, the King sent her no sendings. Occasionally she dreamed of him, fierce old ogre beaming bad news out of the burning wastelands of Suvrael, but that was nothing unusual; the King entered everybody's dreams

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from time to time, and it meant very little. Sometimes, too, Inyanna dreamed of the blessed Lady of the Isle, the gentle mother of the Coronal Lord Malibor, and it seemed to her that that sweet woman was shaking her head sadly, as though to say she was woefully disappointed in her child Inyanna. But it was within the powers of the Lady to speak more strongly to those who had strayed from her path, and that she did not seem to be doing. In the absence of moral correction Inyanna quickly came to have a casual view of her profession. It was not crime; it was merely redistribution of goods. No one seemed to be greatly injured by it, after all.

In time she took as her lover Sidoun, the older brother of Liloyve. He was shorter than Inyanna, and so bony that it was a sharp business to embrace him; but he was a gentle and thoughtful man, who played prettily on the pocket-harp and sang old ballads in a clear light tenor, and the more often she went out thieving with him the more agreeable she found his company. Some rearrangements of the sleeping quarters in Agourmole's den were made, and they were able to spend their nights together. Liloyve and the other thieves seemed to find this development charming.

In Sidoun's company she roved farther and farther through the great city. So efficient were they as a team that often they had their day's quota of larceny done in an hour or two, and that left them free for the rest of the day, for it would not do to exceed one's quota: the social contract of the Grand Bazaar allowed the thieves to take only so much, and no more, with impunity. So it was that Inyanna began to make excursions to the delightful outer reaches of Ni-moya. One of her favorite places was the Park of Fabulous Beasts in the hilly suburb of Gimbeluc, where she could roam among animals of other eras, that had been crowded out of their domains by the spread of civilization on Majipoor. Here she saw such rarities as the wobbly-legged dimilions, fragile long-necked leaf-chompers twice as high as a Skandar, and the dainty tiptoeing sigimoins with a thickly furred tail at either end, and the awkward big-beaked zampidoon birds that once had darkened the sky over Ni-moya with their great flocks, and now existed only in the Park and as one of the city's official emblems. Through some magic that must have been devised in ancient times, voices came from the ground whenever one of these creatures sauntered by, telling onlookers its name and original habitat. Then too the park had lovely secluded glades, where Inyanna and Sidoun could walk hand in hand, saying little, for Sidoun was not a man of many words.

Some days they went on boat-rides out into the Zimr and over to

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the Nissimorn side, and occasionally down the gullet of the nearby River Steiche, which, if followed long enough, would bring them to the forbidden Shapeshifter territory. But that was many weeks' journey upriver, and they traveled only as far as the little Liiman fishing villages a short way south of Nissimorn, where they bought fresh-caught fish and held picnics on the beach and swam and lay in the sun. Or on moonless evenings they went to the Crystal Boulevard, where the revolving reflectors cast dazzling patterns of ever-changing light, and peered in awe at the exhibit cases maintained by the great companies of Majipoor, a streetside museum of costly goods, so magnificent and so opulently displayed that not even the boldest of thieves would dare to attempt an entry. And often they dined at one of the floating restaurants, frequently taking Liloyve with them, for she loved those places above all else in the city. Each island was a miniature of some far territory of the planet, its characteristic plants and animals thriving there, and its special foods and wines a feature: one of windy Piliplok, where those who had the price dined on sea-dragon meat, and one of humid Narabal with its rich berries and succulent ferns, and one of great Stee on Castle Mount, and a restaurant of Stoien and one of Pidruid and one of Til-omon—but none of Velathys, Inyanna learned without surprise, nor was the Shapeshifter capital of Ilirivoyne favored with an island, nor harsh sun-blasted Tolaghai on Suvrael, for Tolaghai and Ilirivoyne were places that most folk of Majipoor did not care to think about, and Velathys was simply beneath notice.

Of all the places that Inyanna visited with Sidoun on these leisurely afternoons and evenings, though, her favorite was the Gossamer Galleria. That mile-long arcade, hanging high above street level, contained the finest shops of Ni-moya, which is to say the finest in all the continent of Zimroel, the finest outside the rich cities of Castle Mount. When they went there, Inyanna and Sidoun put on their most elegant clothes, that they had stolen from the best stalls in the Grand Bazaar—nothing at all to compare with what the aristocrats wore, but superior by far to their daily garb. Inyanna enjoyed getting out of the male costumes that she wore in her role as Kulibhai the thief, and dressing in slinky and clinging robes of purples and greens, and letting her long red hair tumble free. With her fingertips lightly touching Sidoun's, she made the grand promenade of the Galleria, indulging in pleasant fantasies as they inspected the eye-jewels and feather-masks and polished amulets and metal trinkets that were available, for a double handful of shining royal-pieces, to the truly wealthy. None of these things would ever

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be hers, she knew, for a thief who thieved well enough to afford such luxuries would be a danger to the stability of the Grand Bazaar; but it was joyous enough merely to see the treasures of the Gossamer Galleria, and to pretend.

It was on one of these outings to the Gossamer Galleria that Inyanna strayed into the orbit of Calain, brother to the Duke.

8.

She had no notion that that was what she was doing, of course. All she thought she was doing was conducting a little innocent flirtation, as part of the adventure into fantasy that a visit to the Galleria ought to be. It was a mild night in late summer and she was wearing one of her lightest gowns, a sheer fabric less substantial even than the webbing of which the Galleria was woven; and she and Sidoun were in the shop of dragon-bone carvings, examining the extraordinary thumbnail-sized masterpieces of a Skandar boat-captain who produced intricacies of interwoven slivers of ivory of the highest implausibility, when four men in the robes of nobility came in. Sidoun at once faded into a dark corner, for he knew that his clothing and his bearing and the cut of his hair marked him as no equal to these; but Inyanna, conscious that the lines of her body and the cool gaze of her green eyes could compensate for all sorts of deficiencies of manner, boldly held her place at the counter. One of the men glanced at the carving in her hand and said, "If you buy that, you'll be doing well for yourself."

"I have not made up my mind," Inyanna replied.

"May I see it?"

She dropped it lightly into his palm, and at the same time let her eyes make contact brazenly with his. He smiled, but gave his attention mainly to the ivory piece, a map-globe of Majipoor fashioned from many sliding panels of bone. After a moment he said to the proprietor, "The price?"

"It is a gift," answered the other, a slender and austere Ghayrog.

"Indeed. And also from me to you," said the nobleman, spilling the bauble back into the hand of the amazed Inyanna. Now his smile was more intimate. "You are of this city?" he asked quietly.

"I live in Strelain," she said.

"Do you dine often at the Narabal Island?"

"When the mood takes me."

"Good. Will you be there at sunset tomorrow? There will be some-

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one there eager to make your acquaintance."

Hiding her bewilderment, Inyanna bowed. The nobleman bowed and turned away; he purchased three of the little carvings, dropping a purse of coins on the counter; then they departed. Inyanna stared in astonishment at the precious thing in her hand. Sidoun, emerging from the shadows, whispered, "It's worth a dozen royals! Sell it back to the keeper!"

"No," she said. To the proprietor she said, "Who was that man?"

"You are unfamiliar with him?"

"I would not have asked you his name if I knew it."

"Yes. Yes." The Ghayrog made little hissing sounds. "He is Durand Livolk, the Duke's chamberlain."

"And the other three?"

"Two are in the Duke's service, and the third is a companion to the Duke's brother Calain."

"Ah," said Inyanna. She held forth the ivory globe. "Can you mount this on a chain?"

"It will take only a moment."

"And the price for a chain worthy of the object?"

The Ghayrog gave her a long calculating look. "The chain is only accessory to the carving; and since the carving was a gift, so too with the chain." He fitted delicate golden links to the ivory ball, and packed the trinket in a box of shining stickskin.

"At least twenty royals, with the chain!" Sidoun muttered, amazed, when they were outside. "Take it across to that shop and sell it, Inyanna!"

"It was a gift," she said coolly. "I will wear it tomorrow night, when I dine at the Narabal Island."

She could not go to dinner in the gown she had worn that evening, though; and finding another just as sheer and costly in the shops of the Grand Bazaar required two hours of diligent work the next day. But in the end she came upon one that was the next thing to nakedness, yet cloaked everything in mystery; and that was what she wore to the Narabal Island, with the ivory carving dangling between her breasts.

At the restaurant there was no need to give her name. As she stepped off the ferry she was met by a somber and dignified Vroon in ducal livery, who conducted her through the lush groves of vines and ferns to a shadowy bower, secluded and fragrant, in a part of the island cut off by dense plantings from the main restaurant area. Here three people awaited her at a gleaming table of polished nightflower wood beneath a vine whose thick hairy stems were weighed

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down by enormous globular blue flowers. One was Durand Livolk, who had given her the ivory carving. One was a woman, slender and dark-haired, as sleek and glossy as the tabletop itself. And the third was a man of about twice Inyanna's age, delicately built, with thin close-pursed lips and soft features. All three were dressed with such magnificence that Inyanna cringed at her own fancied shabbiness. Durand Livolk rose smoothly, went to Inyanna's side, and murmured, "You look even more lovely this evening. Come: meet some friends. This is my companion, the lady Tisiorne. And this—"

The frail-looking man got to his feet. "I am Calain of Ni-moya," he said simply, in a gentle and feathery voice.

Inyanna felt confused, but only for a moment. She had thought the Duke's chamberlain had wanted her himself; now she understood that Durand Livolk had merely been procuring her for the Duke's brother. That knowledge sparked an instant's indignation in her, but it died quickly away. Why take offense? How many young women of Ni-moya had the chance to dine on the Narabal Island with the brother of the Duke? If to another it might seem that she was being used, so be it; she meant to do a little using herself, in this interchange.

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A place was ready for her beside Calain. She took it and the Vroon instantly brought a tray of liqueurs, all unfamiliar ones, of colors that blended and swirled and phosphoresced. She chose one at random; it had the flavor of mountain mists, and caused an immediate tingling in her cheeks and ears. From overhead came the patter of light rainfall, landing on the broad glossy leaves of the trees and vines, but not on the diners. The rich tropical plantings of this island, Inyanna knew, were maintained by frequent artificial rainfall that duplicated the climate of Narabal.

Calain said, "Do you have favorite dishes here?"

"I would prefer that you order for me."

"If you wish. Your accent is not of Ni-moya."

"Velathys," she replied. "I came here only last year."

"A wise move," said Durand Livolk. "What prompted it?"

Inyanna laughed. "I think I will tell that story another time, if I may."

"Your accent is charming," said Calain. "We rarely meet Velathyntu folk here. Is it a beautiful city?"

"Hardly, my lord."

"Nestling in the Gonghars, though—surely it must be beautiful to see those great mountains all around you."

"That may be. One comes to take such things for granted when one spends all one's life among them. Perhaps even Ni-moya would begin to seem ordinary to one who had grown up here."

"Where do you live?" asked the woman Tisiorne.

"In Strelain," said Inyanna. And then, mischievously, for she had had another of the liqueurs and was feeling it, she added, "In the Grand Bazaar."

"*In* the Grand Bazaar?" said Durand Livolk.

"Yes. Beneath the street of the cheesemongers."

Tisiorne said, "And for what reason do you make your home there?"

"Oh," Inyanna answered lightly, "to be close to the place of my employment."

"In the street of the cheesemongers?" said Tisiorne, horror creeping into her tone.

"You misunderstand. I am employed in the Bazaar, but not by the merchants. I am a thief."

The word fell from her lips like a lightning-bolt crashing on the mountaintops. Inyanna saw the sudden startled look pass from Calain to Durand Livolk, and the color rising in Durand Livolk's face. But these people were aristocrats, and they had aristocratic poise.

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Calain was the first to recover from his amazement. Smiling coolly, he said, "A profession that calls for grace and deftness and quick-wittedness, I have always believed." He touched his glass to Inyanna's. "I salute you, thief who says she's a thief. There's an honesty in that which many others lack."

The Vroon returned, bearing a vast porcelain bowl filled with pale blue berries, waxen-looking, with white highlights. They were thokkas, Inyanna knew—the favorite fruit of Narabal, said to make the blood run hot and the passions to rise. She scooped a few from the bowl; Tisiorne carefully chose a single one; Durand Livolk took a handful, and Calain more than that. Inyanna noticed that the Duke's brother ate the berries seeds and all, said to be the most effective way. Tisiorne discarded the seeds of hers, which brought a wry grin from Durand Livolk. Inyanna did not follow Tisiorne's fashion.

Then there were wines, and morsels of spiced fish, and oysters floating in their own fluids, and a plate of intricate little fungi of soft pastel hues, and eventually a haunch of aromatic meat—the leg of the giant bilantoon of the forests just east of Narabal, said Calain. Inyanna ate sparingly, a nip of this, a bit of that. It seemed the proper thing to do, and also the most sensible. Some Skandar jugglers came by after a while, and did wondrous things with torches and knives and hatchets, drawing hearty applause from the four diners. Calain tossed the rough four-armed fellows a gleaming coin—a five-royal piece, Inyanna saw, astounded. Later it rained again, though not on them, and still later, after another round of liqueurs, Durand Livolk and Tisiorne gracefully excused themselves and left Calain and Inyanna sitting alone in the misty darkness.

Calain said, "Are you truly a thief?"

"Truly. But it was not my original plan. I owned a shop of general wares in Velathys."

"And then?"

"I lost it through a swindle," she said. "And came penniless to Ni-moya, and needed a profession, and fell in with thieves, who seemed thoughtful and sympathetic people."

"And now you have fallen in with much greater thieves," said Calain. "Does that trouble you?"

"Do you regard yourself, then, as a thief?"

"I hold high rank through luck of birth alone. I do no work, except to assist my brother when he needs me. I live in splendor beyond most people's imaginings. None of this is deserved. Have you seen my home?"

"I know it quite well. From the outside, of course, only."

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"Would you care to see the interior of it tonight?"

Inyanna thought briefly of Sidoun, waiting in the whitewashed stone room below the street of the cheesemongers.

"Very much," she said. "And when I've seen it, I'll tell you a little story about myself and Nissimorn Prospect and how it happened that I first came to Ni-moya."

"It will be most amusing, I'm sure. Shall we go?"

"Yes," Inyanna said. "But would it cause difficulties if I stopped first at the Grand Bazaar?"

"We have all night," said Calain. "There is no hurry."

The liveried Vroon appeared, and lit the way for them through the jungled gardens to the island's dock, where a private ferry waited. It conveyed them to the mainland; a floater had been summoned meanwhile, and shortly Inyanna arrived at the plaza of Pidruid Gate. "I'll be only a moment," Inyanna whispered, and, wraith-like in her fragile and clinging gown, she drifted swiftly through the crowds that even at this hour still thronged the Bazaar. Down into the underground den she went. The thieves were gathered around a table, playing some game with glass counters and ebony dice. They cheered and applauded as she made her splendid entrance, but she responded only with a quick tense smile, and drew Sidoun aside. In a low voice she said, "I am going out again, and I will not be back this night. Will you forgive me?"

"It's not every woman who catches the fancy of the Duke's chamberlain."

"Not the Duke's chamberlain," she said. "The Duke's brother." She brushed her lips lightly against Sidoun's. He was glassy-eyed with surprise at her words. "Tomorrow let's go to the Park of Fabulous Beasts, yes, Sidoun?" She kissed him again and moved on, to her bedroom, and drew the flask of dragon-milk out from under her pillow, where it had been hidden for months. In the central room she paused at the gaming-table, leaned close beside Liloyve, and opened her hand, showing her the flask. Liloyve's eyes widened. Inyanna winked and said, "Do you remember what I was saving this for? You said, to share it with Calain when I went to Nissimorn Prospect. And so—"

Liloyve gasped. Inyanna winked and kissed her and went out.

Much later that night, as she drew forth the flask and offered it to the Duke's brother, she wondered in sudden panic whether it might be a vast breach of etiquette to be offering him an aphrodisiac this way, perhaps implying that its use might be advisable. But Calain showed no offense. He was, or else pretended to be, touched

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by her gift; he made a great show of pouring the blue milk into porcelain bowls so dainty they were nearly transparent; with the highest of ceremony he put one bowl in her hand, lifted the other himself, and signalled a salute. The dragon-milk was strange and bitter, difficult for Inyanna to swallow; but she got it down, and almost at once felt its warmth throbbing in her thighs. Calain smiled. They were in the Hall of Windows of Nissimorn Prospect, where a single band of gold-bound glass gave a 360-degree view of the harbor of Ni-moya and the distant southern shore of the river. Calain touched a switch. The great window became opaque. A circular bed rose silently from the floor. He took her by the hand and drew her toward it.

9.

To be the concubine of the Duke's brother seemed a high enough ambition for a thief out of the Grand Bazaar. Inyanna had no illusions about her relationship with Calain. Durand Livolk had chosen her for her looks alone, perhaps something about her eyes, her hair, the way she held herself. Calain, though he had expected her to be a woman somewhat closer to his own class, had evidently found something charming about being thrown together with someone from the bottom rung of society, and so she had had her evening at the Narabal Island and her night at Nissimorn Prospect; it had been a fine interlude of fantasy, and in the morning she would return to the Grand Bazaar with a memory to last her the rest of her life, and that would be that.

Only that was not that.

There was no sleep for them all that night—was it the effect of the dragon-milk, she wondered, or was he like that always?—and at dawn they strolled naked through the majestic house, so that he could show her its treasures, and as they breakfasted on a veranda overlooking the garden he suggested an outing that day to his private park in Istmoy. So it was not to be an adventure of a single night, then. She wondered if she should send word to Sidoun at the Bazaar, telling him she would not return that day, but then she realized that Sidoun would not need to be told. He would interpret her silence correctly. She meant to cause him no pain, but on the other hand she owed him nothing but common courtesy. She was embarked now on one of the great events of her life, and when she returned to the Grand Bazaar it would not be for Sidoun's sake, but

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merely because the adventure was over.

As it happened, she spent the next six days with Calain. By day they sported on the river in his majestic yacht, or strolled hand in hand through the private game-park of the Duke, a place stocked with surplus beasts from the Park of Fabulous Animals, or simply lay on the veranda of Nissimorn Prospect, watching the sun's track across the continent from Piliplok to Pidruid. And by night it was all feasting and revelry, dinner now at one of the floating islands, now at some great house of Ni-moya, one night at the Ducal Palace itself. The Duke was very little like Calain: a much bigger man, and a good deal older, with a wearied and untender manner. Yet he managed to be charming to Inyanna, treating her with grace and gravity and never once making her feel like a street-girl his brother had scooped out of the Bazaar. Inyanna sailed through these events with the kind of cool acceptance one displays in dreams. To show awe, she knew, would be coarse. To pretend to an equal level of rank and sophistication would be even worse. But she arrived at a demeanor that was restrained without being humble, agreeable without being forward, and it seemed to be effective. In a few days it began to seem quite natural to her that she should be sitting at table with dignitaries who were lately returned from Castle Mount with bits of gossip about Lord Malibor the Coronal and his entourage, or who could tell stories of having hunted in the northern marches with the Pontifex Tyeveras when he was Coronal under Ossier, or who had newly come back from meetings at Inner Temple with the Lady of the Isle. She grew so self-assured in the company of these great ones that if anyone had turned to her and said, "And you, milady, how have you passed the recent months?" she would have replied easily, "As a thief in the Grand Bazaar," as she had done that first night on the Narabal Island. But the question did not arise: at this level of society, she realized, one never idly indulged one's curiosity with others, but left them to unveil their histories to whatever degree they preferred.

And therefore when on the seventh day Calain told her to prepare to return to the Bazaar, she neither asked him if he had enjoyed her company nor whether he had grown tired of her. He had chosen her to be his companion for a time; that time was now ended, and so be it. It had been a week she would never forget.

Going back to the den of the thieves was a jolt, though. A sumptuously outfitted floater took her from Nissimorn Prospect to the Grand Bazaar's Piliplok Gate, and a servant of Calain's placed in her arms the little bundle of treasures Calain had given her during

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their week together. Then the floater was gone and Inyanna was descending into the sweaty chaos of the Bazaar, and it was like awakening from a rare and magical dream. As she passed through the crowded lanes no one called out to her, for those who knew her in the Bazaar knew her in her male guise of Kulibhai, and she was dressed now in women's clothes. She moved through the swirling mobs in silence, bathed still in the aura of the aristocracy and moment by moment giving way to an inrushing feeling of depression and loss as it became clear to her that the dream was over, that she had re-entered reality. Tonight Calain would dine with the visiting Duke of Mazadone, and tomorrow he and his guests would sail up the Steiche on a fishing expedition, and the day after that—well, she had no idea, but she knew that she, on that day, would be filching laces and flasks of perfume and bolts of fabric. For an instant, tears surged into her eyes. She forced them back, telling herself that this was foolishness, that she ought not lament her return from Nissimorn Prospect but rather rejoice that she had been granted a week there.

No one was in the thieves' rooms except the Hjort Beyork and one of the Metamorphs. They merely nodded as Inyanna came in. She went to her chamber and donned the Kulibhai costume. But she could not bring herself so soon to return to her thieving. She stowed her packet of jewels and trinkets, Calain's gifts, carefully under her bed. By selling them she could earn enough to exempt her from her profession for a year or two; but she did not plan to part even with the smallest of them. Tomorrow, she resolved, she would go back into the Bazaar. For now, though, she lay face down on the bed she again shared with Sidoun, and when tears came again she let them come, and after a while she rose, feeling more calm, and washed and waited for the others to appear.

Sidoun welcomed her with a nobleman's poise. No questions about her adventures, no hint of resentment, no sly innuendos: he smiled and took her hand and told her he was pleased she had come back, and offered her a sip of a wine of Alhanroel he had just stolen, and told her a couple of stories of things that had happened in the Bazaar while she was away. She wondered if he would feel inhibited in their lovemaking by the knowledge that the last man to touch her body had been a Duke's brother, but no, he reached for her fondly and unhesitatingly when they were in bed, and his gaunt bony body pressed warmly and jubilantly against her. The next day, after their rounds in the Bazaar, they went together to the Park of Fabulous Beasts, and saw for the first time the gossimaule of Glayge, that

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was so slender it was nearly invisible from the side, and they followed it a little way until it vanished, and laughed as though they had never been separated.

The other thieves regarded Inyanna with some awe for a few days, for they knew where she had been and what she must have been doing, and that laid upon her the strangeness that came from moving in exalted circles. But only Liloyve dared to speak directly to her of it, and she only once, saying, "What did he see in you?"

"How would I know? It was all like a dream."

"I think it was justice."

"What do you mean?"

"That you were wrongfully promised Nissimorn Prospect, and this was by way of making atonement to you. The Divine balances the good and the evil, do you see?" Liloyve laughed. "You've had your twenty royals' worth out of those swindlers, haven't you?"

Indeed she had, Inyanna agreed. But the debt was not yet fully paid, she soon discovered. On Starday next, working her way through the booths of the moneychangers and skimming off the odd coin here and there, she was startled suddenly by a hand on her wrist, and wondered what fool of a thief, failing to recognize her, was trying to make arrest. But it was Liloyve. Her face was flushed and her eyes were wide. "Come home right away!" she cried.

"What is it?"

"Two Vroons waiting for you. You are summoned by Calain, and they say you are to pack all your belongings, for you will not be returning to the Grand Bazaar."

10.

So it happened that Inyanna Forlana of Velathys, formerly a thief, took up residence in Nissimorn Prospect as companion to Calain of Ni-moya. Calain offered no explanation, nor did she seek one. He wanted her by his side, and that was explanation enough. For the first few weeks she still expected to be told each morning to make ready to go back to the Bazaar, but that did not occur, and after a while she ceased to consider the possibility. Wherever Calain went, she went: to the Zimr Marshes to hunt the gihorna, to glittering Dulorn for a week at the Perpetual Circus, to Khyntor for the Festival of Geysers, even into mysterious rainy Piurifayne to explore the shadowy homeland of the Shapeshifters. She who had spent all her first nineteen years in shabby Velathys came to take it quite

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for granted that she should be traveling about like a Coronal making the grand processional, with the brother of a royal Duke at her side; but yet she never quite lost her perspective, never failed to see the irony and incongruity of the strange transformations her life had undergone.

Nor was it surprising to her even when she found herself seated at table next to the Coronal himself. Lord Malibor had come to Ni-moya on a visit of state, for it behooved him to travel in the western continent every eight or ten years, by way of showing the people of Zimroel that they weighed equally in their monarch's thoughts with those of his home continent of Alhanroel. The Duke provided the obligatory banquet, and Inyanna was placed at the high table, with the Coronal to her right and Calain at her left, and the Duke and his lady at Lord Malibor's far side. Inyanna had been taught the names of the great Coronals in school, of course, Stiamot and Confalume and Prestimion and Dekkeret and all the rest, and she vaguely remembered the day in her childhood when news came to Velathys that the old Pontifex Ossier was dead, that Lord Tyeveras had succeeded him and had chosen a man of the city of Bombifale, one Malibor, to be the new Coronal; and eventually the new coinage had trickled into her province, showing this Lord Malibor, a broad-faced man with wide-set eyes and heavy brows. But that such people as Coronals and Pontifexes actually existed was a matter of some doubt to her through all those years, and yet here she was with her elbow an inch from Lord Malibor's, and the only thing she marveled at was how very much this burly and massive man in imperial green-and-gold resembled the man whose face was on the coins. She had expected the portraits to be less precise.

It seemed sensible to her that the conversations of Coronals would revolve wholly around matters of state. But in fact Lord Malibor seemed to talk mainly of the hunt. He had gone to this remote place to slay that rare beast, and to that inaccessible and uncongenial place to take the head of this difficult creature, and so on and so on; and he was constructing a new wing of the Castle to house all his trophies. "In a year or two," said the Coronal, "I trust you and Calain will visit me at the Castle. The trophy-room will be complete by then. It will please you, I know, to see such an array of creatures, all of them prepared by the finest taxidermists of Castle Mount." Inyanna did indeed look forward to visiting Lord Malibor's Castle, for the Coronal's enormous residence was a legendary place that entered into everyone's dreams, and she could imagine nothing more wonderful than to ascend to the summit of lofty Castle Mount and

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wander that great building, thousands of years old, exploring its thousands of rooms. But she was only repelled by Lord Malibor's obsession with slaughter. When he talked of killing amorfibots and ghalvars and sigimoins and steetmoy, and of the extreme effort he expended in those killings, Inyanna was reminded of Ni-moya's Park of Fabulous Beasts, where by order of some milder Coronal of long ago those same animals were protected and cherished; and that put her in mind of quiet gaunt Sidoun, who had gone with her so often to that park, and had played so sweetly on his pocket-harp. She did not want to think of Sidoun, to whom she owed nothing but for whom she felt a guilty affection, and she did not want to hear of the killing of rare creatures so that their heads might adorn Lord Malibor's trophy-room. Yet she managed to listen politely to the Coronal's tales of carnage and even to make an amiable comment or two.

Toward dawn, when they were finally back at Nissimorn Prospect and preparing for bed, Calain said to her, "The Coronal is planning to hunt next for sea-dragons. He seeks one known as Lord Kinniken's dragon, that was measured once at more than three hundred feet in length."

Inyanna, who was tired and not cheerful, shrugged. Sea-dragons, at least, were far from rare, and it would be no cause for grief if the Coronal harpooned a few. "Is there room in his trophy-house for a dragon that size?"

"For its head and wings, I imagine. Not that he stands much chance of getting it. The Kinniken's been seen only four times since Lord Kinniken's day, and not for seventy years. But if he doesn't find that one, he'll get another. Or drown in the attempt."

"Is there much chance of that?"

Calain nodded. "Dragon-hunting's dangerous business. He'd be wiser not to try. But he's killed just about everything that moves on land, and no Coronal's ever been out in a dragon-ship, and so he'll not be discouraged from it. We leave for Piliplok at the end of the week."

"We?"

"Lord Malibor has asked me to join him on the hunt." With a rueful smile he said, "In truth he wanted the Duke, but my brother begged off, claiming duties of state. So he asked me. One does not easily refuse such things."

"Do I accompany you?" Inyanna asked.

"We have not planned it that way."

"Oh," she said quietly. After a moment she asked, "How long will you be gone?"

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"The hunt lasts three months, usually. During the season of the southerly winds. And then the time to reach Piliplok, and outfit the vessel, and to return—it would be six or seven months all told. I'll be home by spring."

"Ah. I see."

Calain came to her side and drew her against him. "It will be the longest separation we will ever endure. I promise you that."

She wanted to say, *Is there no way you can refuse to go?* Or, *Is there some way I can be allowed to go with you?* But she knew how useless that was, and what a violation of the etiquette by which Calain lived. So Inyanna made no further protest. She took Calain into her arms, and they embraced until sunrise.

On the eve of his departure for the post of Piliplok, where the dragon-ships made harbor, Calain summoned her to his study on the highest level of Nissimorn Prospect and offered her a thick document to sign.

"What is this?" she asked, without picking it up.

"Articles of marriage between us."

"This is a cruel joke, milord."

"No joke, Inyanna. No joke at all."

"But—"

"I would have discussed the matter with you this winter, but then the damnable dragon voyage arose, and left me no time. So I have rushed things a little. You are no mere concubine to me: this paper formalizes our love."

"Is our love something that needs formality?"

Calain's eyes narrowed. "I am going off on a risky and fool-hardy adventure, from which I expect to return, but while I am at sea my fate will not be in my own hands. As my companion, you have no legal rights of inheritance. As my wife—"

Inyanna was stunned. "If the risk is so great, abandon the voyage, milord!"

"You know that's impossible. I must bear the risk. And so I would provide for you. Sign it, Inyanna."

She stared a long time at the document, a draft of many pages. Her eyes would not focus properly and she neither could nor would make out the words that some scribe had indited in the most elegant of calligraphy. Wife to Calain? It seemed almost monstrous to her, a shattering of all proprieties, a stepping beyond every boundary. And yet—and yet—

He waited. She could not refuse.

In the morning he departed in the Coronal's entourage for Piliplok,

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and all that day Inyanna roamed the corridors and chambers of Nissimorn Prospect in confusion and disarray. That night the Duke thoughtfully invited her for dinner; the next, Durand Livolk and his lady escorted her to dine at the Pidruid Island, where a shipment of fireshower-palm wine had arrived. Other invitations followed, so that her life was a busy one, and the months passed. It was midwinter now. And then came word that a great sea-dragon had fallen upon the ship of Lord Malibor and sent it to the bottom of the Inner Sea. Lord Malibor was dead, and all those who had sailed with him, and a certain Voriax had been named Coronal. And under the terms of Calain's will, his widow Inyanna Forlana had come into full ownership of the great estate known as Nissimorn Prospect.

11.

When the period of mourning was over and she had an opportunity to make arrangements for such matters, Inyanna called for one of her stewards and ordered rich gifts of money to be delivered to the Grand Bazaar, for the thief Agourmole and all members of his family. It was Inyanna's way of saying that she had not forgotten them. "Tell me their exact words when you hand the purses to them," she ordered the steward, hoping they would send back some warm remembrances of the old times together, but the man reported that none of them had said anything of interest, that they had simply expressed surprise and gratitude toward the Lady Inyanna, except for the man named Sidoun, who had refused his gift and could not be urged to accept it. Inyanna smiled sadly and had Sidoun's twenty royals distributed to children in the streets, and after that she had no further contact with the thieves of the Grand Bazaar, nor did she ever go near the place.

Some years later, while visiting the shops of the Gossamer Galleria, the Lady Inyanna observed two suspicious-looking men in the shop of the dragon-bone carvings. From their movements and the way they exchanged glances, it seemed quite clear to her that they were thieves, maneuvering to create a diversion that would allow them to plunder the shop. Then she looked at them more closely and realized that she had encountered them before, for one was a short thick-framed man, and the other tall and knobby-faced and pale. She gestured to her escorts, who moved quietly into position about the two.

Inyanna said, "One of you is Steyg, and one is called Vezan Ormus,

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but I have forgotten which of you is which. On the other hand, I remember the other details of our meeting quite well."

The thieves looked at one another in alarm. The taller one said, "Milady, you are mistaken. My name is Elakon Mirj, and my friend is called Thanooz."

"These days, perhaps. But when you visited Velathys long ago you went by other names. I see that you've graduated from swindling to thievery, eh? Tell me this: how many heirs to Nissimorn Prospect did you discover, before the game grew dull?"

Now there was panic in their eyes. They seemed to be calculating the chances of making a break past Inyanna's men toward the door; but that would have been rash. The guards of the Gossamer Galleria had been notified and were gathered just outside.

The shorter thief, trembling, said, "We are honest merchants, milady, and nothing else."

"You are incorrigible scoundrels," said Inyanna, "and nothing else. Deny it again and I'll have you shipped to Suvrael for penal servitude!"

"Milady—"

"Speak the truth," Inyanna said.

Through chattering teeth the taller one replied, "We admit the charge. But it was long ago. If we have injured you, we will make full restitution."

"Injured me? Injured me?" Inyanna laughed. "Rather, you did me the greatest service anyone could have done. I feel only gratitude toward you; for know that I was Inyanna Forlana the shopkeeper of Velathys, whom you cheated out of twenty royals, and now I am the Lady Inyanna of Ni-moya, mistress of Nissimorn Prospect. And so the Divine protects the weak and brings good out of evil." She beckoned to the guards. "Convey these two to the imperial proctors, and say that I will give testimony against them later, but that I ask mercy for them, perhaps a sentence of three months of roadmending, or something similar. And afterward I think I'll take the two of you into my service. You are worthless rogues, but clever ones, and it's better to keep you close at hand, where you can be watched, than to let you go loose to prey on the unwary." She waved her hand. They were led away.

Inyanna turned to the keeper of the shop. "I regret the interruption," she said. "Now, these carvings of the emblems of the city, that you think are worth a dozen royals apiece—what would you say to thirty royals for the lot, and maybe the little carving of the bilantoon thrown in to round things off—"

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LETTERS

"Correspondences are like small-clothes before the invention of suspenders; it is impossible to keep them up." (Sydney Smith: letter to Mrs. Crowe, January 31, 1841.)

Correspondences might also be compared to the suspenders: they snap back if mishandled. That's why we try to read every letter that comes to the magazine and handle it appropriately—but it helps if your mail is properly addressed. Letters to the editor should go to Box 13116, Philadelphia PA 19101. Subscription matters and changes of address are handled at P.O. Box 1933, Marion OH 43305. Notices for the SF Conventional Calendar should go (well in advance, please) to Mr. Strauss at 9850 Fairfax Square #232, Fairfax VA 22031. Matters for the publisher's other departments—advertising, for example—should be directed to Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York NY 10017. And keep those correspondences coming.
—Elizabeth Mitchell

Dear Mr. Scithers, et al,

Like several of your readers, I was under the impression that some subtle force had driven a wedge between science fiction and the art of narrative. It is sometimes a pleasure to be mistaken. Special favorites so far, "The House of If" and "Through All Your Houses Wandering." What this dwelling fixation portends, I do not know.

My acquaintance with SF has been lasting but a bit spotty; this is partly because I use only Braille or recorded books; thus I'm still waiting for Heinlein's *Lazarus Long* and the last two books in the *Foundation* trilogy. The point is, however, that your magazine has now joined the ranks of those few which have a Braille edition. Up until a few months ago one magazine, which appeared irregularly, was both Brailled and recorded. It was also a surprise to me that some zines really do appear every month. For details, see below:

Those whose eyesight at reading would fail
Once could not pierce our *Galaxy*'s veil.
Now we choose at no risk;
Analog is on disk,
While *IA'sfm* is in Braille.

Many thanks to the Library of Congress and to all on your end

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who helped make this new state of affairs possible.

Max Swanson
2616 Harriet Ave. S., Apt. 312
Minneapolis MN 55408

Perhaps there should be some directions for getting the Braille edition. What about it, Shawna?

—Isaac Asimov

A Braille version of Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine *is available free to the visually handicapped through the National Library Service for the Blind and Visually Handicapped. Interested persons should contact their NLS regional branch library; every state has one. If your local librarian doesn't know its location, contact the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, The Library of Congress, 1291 Taylor Street NW, Washington DC 20542. Their telephone number is (202) 882-1969.*

—Shawna McCarthy

Sir:

I have reference to the extremely prolix letter by Mr. Henry Lee Morgenstern in your issue of June 8, 1981, in which he reports that he did not like my story "Peregrine: Perplexed." I regret (though not very much) his not having liked it, but I do wish to let him know that I do wish if in the future he writes any more letters saying that he does not like my writing (his privilege), that he would say so in the first paragraph of his letter, and not oblige me to read three of his letter's four paragraphs before being able to discover his distaste. It may be of interest to Mr. Morgenstern that it cost me just as much to read his letter as it cost him to read my story, and if he wishes to return, via your office, the copy of the Magazine containing the offending story, I shall gladly return his money by return of post.

Furthermore, if he gives me any more trouble, I will have Harlan Ellison beat him up.

I remain, Sir, your Servant to command,

Avram Davidson
Deneb 3

Gee, Avram, are you sure? *Having Harlan beat someone up is a fate worse than death.*

—Isaac Asimov

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Dear George and Isaac,

The first thing I usually do when the current issue of *IA'sfm* arrives is to turn to Baird Searles's column, "On Books." As a rule I find his reviews and comments entertaining as well as informative and helpful. However, in the issue at hand (July 6) he makes a statement in reference to the Southern Illinois University Press reprint of the July 1939 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction* that is historically inaccurate and should be corrected (I'm surprised neither one of you picked up on it).

Searles states that the reason that particular issue of *ASF* was chosen for reprinting was because, in addition to its superlative table of contents (including Asimov's first story printed in *ASF, Trends*), "it was the first issue of *Astounding* to be edited by John W. Campbell." That, of course, is just not true. Campbell became editor of *Astounding Stories* with the September 1937 issue, although he himself didn't feel that he truly became the editor until the March 1938 issue, when he changed the name from *Astounding Stories* to *Astounding Science Fiction* and all the stories in the issue were stories purchased by him and not holdovers from Tremaine's inventory.

The reason that the July 1939 issue of *ASF* was reprinted is that today it is accepted by all scholars and *aficionados* of the SF genre to be the beginning of the "Golden Age" of science fiction. In all modesty (following the fine example of Dr. Isaac Asimov) I must lay claim to having been the first to identify the July 1939 issue of ASF as the beginning of the "Golden Age", and did so in my *A Requiem for Astounding* published in 1964.

This claim is bolstered by both Robert A. W. Lowndes and Isaac himself. In his editorial in the first issue of his fine, but short-lived reprint mag *Famous Science Fiction Tales of Wonder*, Winter 1966/67, Doc wrote the following: "Dr. Isaac Asimov, quoting Alva Rogers, author of *A Requiem for Astounding*, noted that the 'golden age' of science fiction started with the July 1939 issue. He, Asimov, was entirely content with this date." Doc goes on to list the contents of that issue and then concludes: "Most of the science fiction fans are inclined to accept this demarcation line, and certainly most of the anthologists have adhered to it."

Sorry to go on at such length, guys, but I did want to set the record straight, okay?

Best,

Alva Rogers
Oakland CA

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The error is certainly mine, and I thank Alva Rogers and the several others who pointed it out. As partial justification, I offer the jacket copy on the book in question: "Critics view the magazine reprinted here as the first great issue edited by John W. Campbell, Jr." Ambiguous, certainly, and since it was history for me, not a first-hand experience of buying it off the stands, I should have double-checked dates and didn't. More research from the critic and less fuzzy copy from publishers is obviously needed.

—Baird Searles

Dear Dr. Asimov,

I wish like Hell that I could find something better to say about your magazine—that hasn't already been said. I've been reading your mag. for just four months, and have found myself addicted to it. I had been interested in Science Fiction ever since I was ten.

I'm starting to *write* some now. Just like you said in the June 8th issue huh?). I saw *Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica, The Empire Strikes Back,* and had read *I Robot,* some Bradbury, and a little Arthur C. Clarke. Then I learned you had a magazine out. I was overcome with joy, for I live in a town with no posted population, and getting any good literature is hard. I looked and looked, and I finally found your mag.—twenty miles away, and I must say that twenty miles is no distance to go to get such a good Science Fiction mag. The stories are great (though a little long at times), interesting, enjoyable. The editorials are informative, unbiased? No, informative yes. So to make a long story short—keep up the good work. No I do not need your manuscript needs; I already have them.

Long live the king *(IA'sfm)!*

Jim Allen
Rte 3
Thomasville MO 65578

P.S.:

I encourage all fellow teenagers who want to, or are trying to write Science Fiction to write me to let me know of any distinct problems they're having, or tell me about what techniques work where.

I find enthusiasm like this delightful. To find that twenty miles "is no distance to go" rather takes away the breath of this particular non-traveller. Good for you!

—Isaac Asimov

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Dear Dr. Asimov and Indispensable Associates:

Like Steven Gould, I am "owned" by a word processor/home computer (I just happen to use the Magic Wand software, which is quite good). Unlike Mr. Gould, I am not a science-fiction writer, though I've been reading it almost as long as the term has been used.

Believe it or not, I can't recall ever having written a fan letter to a science-fiction magazine before, although I've thought of it on occasion. But this time the strange combination of an utterly fascinating story and a nerve-jangling lack of thorough research in the science behind the story was just annoying enough to trigger my response.

The story was, as you may have guessed from my first reference, Steven Gould's "Wind Instrument" in the June 8 issue. Since I am neither a critic nor an analyst, I would find it difficult to say why it grabbed my interest and held on tenaciously; but at least for me, it was one of the truly unforgettable stories of the year. The evidence of insufficient research occurred quite early—on the second and sixth pages—and before I read further, I'm afraid I had begun to write Mr. Gould off as a sloppy researcher. I must say that I changed my mind as the story built to its climax, and by the time I finished, the errors seemed very minor indeed. Nonetheless, they are there, and they do detract from an otherwise excellent story.

First, he mentions a note, and continues, "Then, . . . came another, a minor third higher in pitch. A third note sounded, five whole steps above the first, creating a minor chord." Oh, no it doesn't—it creates the first, second, and fourth element of a *minor seventh* chord. A true minor chord consists basically of three notes separated (in ascending order) by the intervals of a minor third and a major third. The first and second notes are indeed a minor third apart, as Mr. Gould states; but the third note is NOT "five whole steps above the first." The interval from the first to the third IS known as a perfect fifth, but it is three and one-half whole steps above the first, NOT five whole steps. Five whole steps would make an interval of a minor seventh (e.g., in the C scale, from C up to B flat). Adding this to an ordinary major chord such as C–E–G would create a seventh chord, and adding it to a minor chord such as C–E flat–G would create a minor seventh chord.

The other inaccuracy is found in the discussion of a pipe organ, page 151 of the magazine. Karl describes a pipe organ as ". . . a set of pipes with reeds in them . . ." This is erroneous only in that it is an incomplete description; some organ pipes have reeds, but others, the "flue" pipes, do not; in these, air moving past a constriction or

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edge causes eddies which set the air column in vibration. Also, not all organ pipes are "closed on one end," as Karl is made to remark a few lines later. There are both open pipes and closed, or "stopped," pipes. Neither are they all cylinders, as in Allan's definition; a typical organ contains pipes of various shapes—cylindrical, conical, and rectangular, which produce differing qualities of tone (i.e., differing numbers and intensities of overtones).

These may be minor points (no pun intended), but if these inaccuracies had been avoided by a glance at a good text on acoustics or the physics of music, the story would have gotten off to a more convincing start. Please don't be discouraged by these remarks, Steve; I still think the story was great! And I might suggest to the Good Doctor that this would be a fine excuse for a science-fact article on the acoustics of music—a fascinating set of mathematical relationships if there ever was one.

Sincerely,

David L. Jones
Kaneohe HI

It is letters like these which make me aware of how much I don't know. I also get a small glimpse of how much there is to know in even what would seem a "small" subject and, therefore, how much there is to know altogether. Very discouraging.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Sirs:

After receiving your magazine for over a year, I have finally decided to send the S.A.S.E. for your story requirements. Perhaps just taking this "big step" is enough to give me incentive to develop my writing ability. I am a senior at New Mexico State University studying physics and computer science, and I've been reading science fiction since grade school. (All this for the benefit of that great demographer in the sky—or wherever.)

I do enjoy your magazine, especially the regular columns (editorial, letters, Martin Gardner, reviews) and the short tidbits such as Ferdinand Feghoot. I have trouble finding the time to read the longer pieces, though I am seldom disappointed when I do. It is interesting to read the letters from people who are somehow disoriented by the fact that Dr. Asimov's name appears on the cover, and yet he does not single-handedly write every issue. For some time during my science fiction-reading career I searched out and read all the Asimov

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fiction I could find, and most of his stories remain quite clear in my mind still. However, I came to the conclusion that the man's character comes through best in his essays and introductions. The same spirit which typifies these short articles also pervades the magazine quite strongly.

Well, it's been a pleasure speaking to you, but I really must go. Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Tom Little
Las Cruces NM

I'm glad you like my non-fiction, too, because (I must admit) I do myself. However, I have never stopped writing fiction, and I even occasionally write science fiction, so continue to search them out.
—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. A.:

I recently received the July, '81 issue of your magazine, and read the letter sent in by Mr. George J. Xavyrr of Denville, New Jersey. I cannot leave it uncontested. I also think your reply hit the nail very neatly on the head.

I readily admit to a biased opinion, being a foreign language fan, but I agree 100% with your statement that the general American linguistic illiteracy is a big handicap. Frankly, I feel that *because* of our linguistic arrogance (sadly enough, it DOES often amount to that), we are not regarded with the greatest of favor. I won't get any more political than that.

Anyway, there *are* times when no other word except the foreign one will do, although those times aren't that frequent. I currently subscribe to a Spanish SF publication, and many words in English, French, and German are liberally mixed in with the dominantly Spanish text. Mr. Xavyrr's reference to *The Elements of Style*, in support of his view, left me unconvinced and unimpressed. Mr. Xavyrr is quite correct—he WON'T stop other authors from using foreign words and phrases in their material.

One last bit of news: did you know that your magazine is being sold in Spain? It's selling for 250 pesetas (approximately US $3.12—but check the exchange rate), and is quite popular among the SF fans there. In its magazine, book, and movie reviews, the above-mentioned publication (*Nueva dimensión*) comments on each issue as it appears on the stands. The editors feel the translation to

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Spanish leaves a lot to be desired, but your magazine is popular, nevertheless. Keep up the good work!

Arlene D. Na
Morris Township NJ

And yet I must admit that it is comfortable to be able to wander over all areas of 6,000,000 square miles of the United States and Canada (minus Quebec, of course) and have English understood everywhere. I long for a globally understood language.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov:

I enjoyed Sharon Farber's story "When the Old Man Waves the Banner" because it provides a dramatized answer to a question I sometimes ask on introductory psychology exams. The question: How would life be different if you had to rely exclusively on short-term memory? However, assuming that Farber's story is set in our familiar universe, there are several problems with it.

First, memory researchers usually assign a duration of 15 to 30 *seconds* to short-term memory, a far briefer interval than the 15 *minutes* Farber assigns. The classic example is retaining a telephone number just long enough to dial it. You might still remember the number 15 minutes later, if you had rehearsed it, but then it would have been processed into long-term memory.

Second, the story indicates that the linkage between short-term and long-term memory was broken via hippocampal lesioning. This is probably based on Milner's case study of H.M., a patient whose hippocampus was completely removed in the treatment of epilepsy. Following the operation H.M. was no longer able to retain new material for more than about 30 seconds. However, a recent review of such cases indicates that only a few conformed to this pattern. To complicate matters further, a number of current researchers are suggesting that the short- vs. long-term dichotomy no longer fits the data very well and should be jettisoned.

Despite this I found the story entertaining, as indeed I find most stories in your magazine. In fact, the same issue contained "Trial Sample" by Ted Reynolds, one of the best short stories I've read in recent years. I particularly enjoyed his good-natured jab at client-centered counselling.

Live long and prosper.

Sincerely,

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Dick St. Jean
Associate Professor
University of Prince Edward Island
Canada

Talking about memory, I have been trying to watch myself as I am asked to recall something. It is usually instantaneous, but I can't figure out how I do it.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Sir:

I have just finished my July 6, 1981 *IA'sfm* and although I enjoyed all the stories, reviews, and assorted other goodies, one story stands out so much that I must make special mention of it.

Sharon Webb's "Earthchild Rising" was outstanding—it really got to me . . . I was actually angry when I turned the page and found myself at the end of the story and facing the "Letters" column (nothing against Letters!). I have always enjoyed Ms. Webb's Bull Run series and all of her other stories, but "Earthchild Rising" is on a pedestal all by itself. To Sharon Webb I say thanks and MORE!

I do have one complaint (I never thought I'd say this)—please be sure that your address labels are firmly stuck to the cover. Normally I would be delighted at the prospect of effortlessly peeling off the offending label so as to enjoy the cover artwork, but after peeling off this month's address label I realized with horror that anyone else could have peeled my precious address label off (mistakenly or otherwise!). So PLEASE—heavy on the glue.

Sincerely,

Rita Hansen
Rt. 1 Box 3122
Roscommon, MI 48653

I like to think of name-plate glue as analogous to short-term memory. Once it has reached you, the name-plate has no further function and should *come off easily.*

—Isaac Asimov

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Our January 18, 1982 issue promises to be an exciting way to start off our sixth volume (and, of course, the new year). We've got Robert Silverberg, Joan Vinge, Gene Wolfe, and Somtow Sucharitkul. You won't want to miss this one. On sale December 22. 1981.

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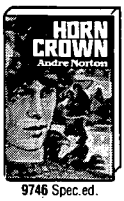

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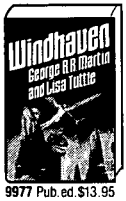

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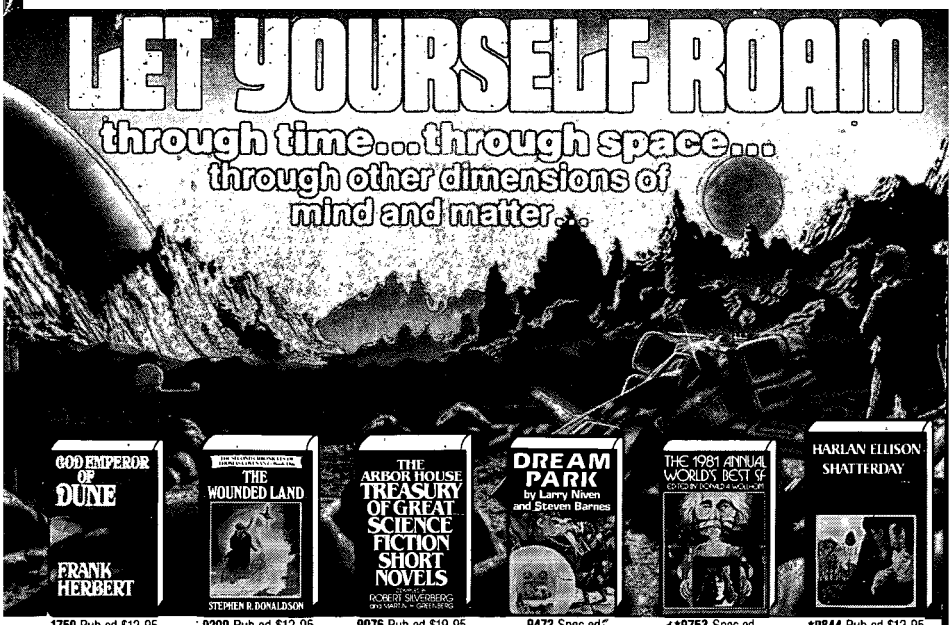

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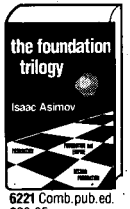

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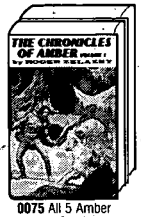

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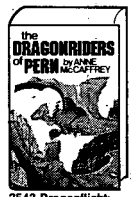

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